

# INDIA'S ROAD TO SOCIALISM

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## FOREWORD.

Amidst the grave contradictions and the conflicting ideologies that face us to-day in national and international affairs, there is one outstanding fact that challenges our attention. That fact is the ushering in of socialism into world polity. Feared as a bogey, hunted after as a mirage, suspected as subversive doctrine, suppressed as sedition, it is gradually emerging as the only way out of the mess that humanity has made of its affairs. It has become the fashion, not merely for doctrinaire theorists and agitators out for mischief but for conservative statesmen and responsible administrators as well, to call in the aid of socialism to solve the problems that confront them. Indeed it is an amusing feature of our times that opposing systems and rival schools of thought claim allegiance to the socialist doctrine and seek to justify their practices in the light of the socialist philosophy. Britain, ruled by the most blue-blooded of Imperialisms claims, in effect, to have built up an administration, the most socialistic in the whole world! German Nazism and Russian Bolshevism engaged in a death struggle for the ideological conquest of the earth, alike claim descent from the great masters who propounded the socialist theory and mouth identical slogans in regard to the welfare of the proletariat, the destruction of the bourgeoisie, etc. In the midst of

a devastating war, Parliaments as well as Dictators rush to nationalise Industry, control the prices, regulate the wages, curtail the profits, put down the money-changers, and adopt other measures which would inevitably lead to a socialist economy.

How shall we explain this curious phenomenon? How shall we reconcile its contradictory and rather amusing features? The truth seems to be that the world is in growing pains. The institutions and the traditions that humanity set up during its childhood to meet the primitive conditions of its existence on this planet seem no longer to satisfy the needs of our times. The old forms are breaking down. Men are tired of the bejewelled monarch who pretends to protect his subjects by might of his mien. People have lost faith in the shining altar at the Temple beckoning to a life of glory beyond Death. The patriarchal family can no longer satisfy the fast multiplying needs of the individual. The feudal virtues fall short of the cravings of the modern man. Faith in a merciful God, loyalty to a protecting king, obedience to the wise headman of the family—these were good enough in those days when man was at the mercy of Nature and his needs and aspirations were necessarily limited. But now, science has given man such an ascendancy over Nature that his powers and his needs have grown beyond his wildest dreams. He finds a vast empire open out before him and await his advent. He is impatient to rush forward and to conquer. But he is held back by

the chains which he himself forged in the past. He is made to render homage to God, king and father, dolls which satisfied his cravings during his childhood. But he is now grown up, he is adolescent and is filled with new passions and new ambitions. He protests against these ancient restrictions. He wants to go forward, to break with the past.

This conflict has been to some extent solved in the realm of religion in India, though unfortunately the solution has not been widely adopted. Indians who took to religious reflection earlier than other nations, soon discovered that the ancient notion of a fatherly God, sitting high above in the Heavens, and dispensing justice to erring mortals was strangely inconsistent. The urge to a better and a fuller life could not come from without, as an act of grace from someone else but it could come only from within, from a better understanding of one's own being and from a greater effort to be true to oneself. "*Āham Brahma Asmi*," God is within me—I am God. This is revolutionary doctrine and like many revolutions it was suppressed by a hypocritical leadership that erected a barrier so as to prevent its reaching the masses. The *mantra* was made available only to the initiated, the esoteric. The exoteric, the multitude, were outside the pale of its beneficence.

What the Vedanta achieved for religion in India, the doctrine of Democracy achieved for

politics in Europe. The western nations soon made the discovery that the idea of a King whose arms were mighty enough to protect the inhabitants of a whole country, was rather absurd. The people should combine among themselves to fight for their safety and their rights. The country should be ruled not by an individual king but by the organised will of the people. This solution again was revolutionary and, in its turn, was sought to be thwarted by the erection of racial barriers. The theory was propounded that the white races, the chosen people of God, were the true inheritors of Democracy while the coloured peoples of the earth had to be subjugated and ruled by their betters.

Socialism is the attempt to find a remedy in the sphere of economics for the growing pains of humanity. It points out that the patriarchal chief, the feudal lord, the capitalist boss have had their day. They were no doubt needed in their times and played their part well. But to-day the individual must become his own chief, the peasant his own lord and the worker his own boss. Industry must become democratised. The doctrine of "*Aham Brahma Asmi*" must be applied to the region of economics. Socialism is therefore revolutionary thought but it is well to remember that it is not more of a revolution than Vedanta or Democracy. Much of the fear and the prejudice against Socialism is born of the ignorance of its true import. Peace and ordered progress can be

maintained side by side with the adoption of socialist measures. Indeed it is becoming apparent to most Governments in the world that the only effective means of preserving law and order is the rapid building up of a socialist economy within their frontiers.

Again the attempt is being made to defeat the revolution, now in the economic sphere, by the erection of doctrinal tariff walls. Socialism is said to be the monopoly of the industrially advanced nations. Peasant civilisations dependent upon cottage industries must have a long wait and pass through their travails of feudalism and capitalism before they can be admitted to the society of the elites of the earth, the socialists. This is the greatest danger to India to day and Sri K. Santhanam has made an earnest endeavour to study this danger and give us timely warning. At a time when there is so much of socialist slogan-mongering and so little of constructive thought, it is a relief to peruse this book which goes down to fundamentals, while, at the same time, keeping clear of the danger of dogmatising.

RAMGARH, }  
19th March, 1940. }

S. RAMANATHAN.



# India's Road to Socialism

## PART 1

### BASIC IDEAS AND ASSUMPTIONS

#### CHAPTER I

#### INTRODUCTION

The most important political and psychological development in India during the present decade is the rapid and to some people alarming spread of Socialist ideas. This is no doubt true of most countries of the world. It is due primarily to two causes. The rapid development of Socialist economy in Soviet Russia and the necessity of economic planning to escape from the economic collapse in most capitalist countries brought about by the great depression with which this decade started, cleared the ground for the propagation of the new gospel from a new vantage ground. The very steps taken by the principal capitalist countries like the United States of America, Britain and France, helped the advocates of socialism. Huge public works, currency control, state assistance to housing and

shipping, unemployment relief and other devices of capitalism served to emphasise the superiority of planning to the old doctrine of *laissez faire*.

It may be admitted that the industrial countries have to a large extent recovered from the great depression but two ugly factors have contributed to this recovery. The countries which still exist on primitive economy have been forced to reduce their standard of life which was already deplorably low, as the prices of primary commodities have been depressed to a greater extent than those of manufactured goods. Part of the recovery was due to furious rearmament which has introduced the dilemma of war or economic breakdown. It is not realised to what an extent rearmament has proved to be a substitute for socialist planning. There is no limit to the quantity of armament which a country can possess. As every kind of military equipment becomes obsolete in a few years owing to technical improvements, rearmament is a perpetual process. Not being articles of individual consumption and therefore, not limited by individual purchasing capacities of the people, it is not bound by the law of demand and supply which controls the supply of other articles in a capitalist economy. Such rearmament is obviously limited by national resources but States can mortgage the future of their countries to a far greater extent than individuals.

Disinterested thinkers of the capitalist countries have been deeply perturbed by both these factors. In the long run the prosperity of the industrial countries depends on the purchasing power of the agricultural countries which form the markets for the manufactured goods. Continued rearmament on a large scale is bound to produce a grave distortion in the national economy of every country engaged in it. The disastrous war which has now broken out is bound to strike another dangerous blow at capitalism whoever may be the victor and even if the war ends in a stalemate. Socialism will appear more than ever as the only way out of the present tangle.

It is not the purpose of this book to discuss the international aspects of socialism. It is obvious that international events will have their profound effects on this country in every direction. Socialism is not a plan or a doctrine for any country. Its basic ideas are applicable to all countries. But no special effort is needed to expound them. The difficulty in India is rather that no attempt is made by Indian thinkers and leaders to go beyond these general ideas and relate them to the objective factors which are bound to govern the development in India in any case. It is not intended in this book to produce a detailed plan of socialist reconstruction of India. Its purpose is rather to define and discuss the features which are special to India in any such reconstruction.

The vital difference between physical and social sciences is that in the case of the latter no calm and disinterested experiment is possible. *A priori* ideas and prejudices play and have to play a dominant part. It is not possible to change the distribution of wealth or political power within a country or between different countries without inviting passions and conflicts which are not conducive to calm reflection. It is nevertheless as true in the social sciences as in physics or chemistry that only actual experience can establish the truth. Ideas and principles can only formulate hypotheses to be put to the proof of actual experiment. It may be admitted that human values change far more rapidly than physical phenomena though even the latter do not appear to be as immutable as they were once believed to be. Still the rate of change of human needs, desires and instincts is not so great as to make scientific thinking or action based on such thinking impossible or useless. Only, such thinking and action have not the same validity as the laws of the physical sciences or the permanence of the mechanical inventions based on such laws. While it is undeniable that a system based on free individual action impelled by the profit motive results in grave inequalities, gross injustices and recurring economic and political crises, it is no less true that the socialist plan is still in the nature of a hypothesis. It is not any fault of socialism. Every new system must start in the form of a hypothesis, at first grotesque

and unbelievable, next a subject matter of discussion and finally as a courageous experiment in the face of dialectical opponents and prophets of disaster.

At the same time, it is flatly contradictory to the claim of scientific approach made by socialists either to believe that socialist principles have *a priori* validity or that they would not require continual modification and limitation in the light of actual experience. Unscientific use is made of the great Russian experiment both by its opponents and its panegyrists. The leaders of Russia have proved themselves to be wise opportunists within the general plan of socialism. But they cannot as yet be declared to have proved that it is the only or even the best plan under modern conditions. Their wonderful five-year plans and their substantial fulfilment merely warrant the hope that full proof may be forthcoming before long. It may, however, not be so near as some in their enthusiasm fondly believe. Recent Soviet diplomacy has shown that socialist leaders are not proof against the temptations of power politics. They have yet to demonstrate that they have found the means to eliminate the corruption and inefficiency of bureaucratic management while maintaining its stability and security.

In propaganda, it is inevitable that socialism should be represented as a single definite plan of social reconstruction based upon a few immutable

principles of absolute and universal application. It is not possible to evoke the enthusiasm of the masses to new courses without making them believe that the millennium is at hand. This naturally provokes fantastic and exaggerated descriptions of the possible evil consequences of the adoption of socialism on the part of the defenders of the existing scheme of things. This tug of-war is inevitable in every social process. But no lasting benefit can be achieved for mankind through fanaticism. Those who are earnest about the evolution of a new order based upon the socialistic outlook can do no greater service to the cause than by obtaining a clear and reasoned comprehension of the main elements of that order. The capitalist order has infinite variations. It has produced not only the Imperialist Democracies of Britain and France with their high general standards of life side by side with exploitation of the poorest peoples on earth kept at the margin of starvation but also the impressive spectacle of the U. S. A. with its almost self-sufficient economy and the well-distributed and contented prosperity of Sweden and Denmark. It is no less certain that the socialist order also will have infinite variations according to the circumstances and resources of the countries adopting it. Between extreme individualist capitalism, which has disappeared for ever, never to return, and complete communism which may never come into existence within any period we may contemplate, there are an

infinite number of positions Nor will it happen that any country will continue to occupy any one position for long or that the dynamic changes of different countries will be exactly parallel This book is chiefly intended to indicate the directions in which India would have to go in conformity with her objective conditions ancient traditions and the present impulses and ideals animating her millions

There is bound to be a close connection between the means and ends Though they may start with the same goal in view, the actual achievement will vary with the method adopted Socialism imposed through a violent revolution must differ widely from that reached through constitutional methods Those who imagine that there is only one road to Socialism suffer from a morbid obsession of the futility of rational persuasion and an exaggerated faith in forcible methods It is at least a necessary and profitable undertaking for Indians to investigate whether this country cannot hope to achieve its new order through generally non violent methods and if such a thing were possible, to try to have as concrete and clear a picture as possible of the process and the result

These will be the main topics discussed in this book But, before embarking on them two questions have to be answered Cannot India advance on the road of capitalism and arrive at a result obtained

by some of the smaller nations of Europe like Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and Holland? Would it not be better to preserve for our rural population their primitive economy as far as possible and save them from the evils of complicated and regimented systems which both capitalism and socialism involve? The Indian socialist answers both questions in the negative. But, he relies largely on general *a priori* arguments which have no particular relation to Indian conditions. In the next few chapters an attempt will be made to discuss these two questions without any prejudices born of abstract theoretical belief.



## CHAPTER II

### WHY NOT CAPITALISM?

The general evils of capitalist economy are too well-known to require detailed description. Grave inequalities in wealth and income, recurring trade cycles of boom and depression, struggle for markets and the exploitation of undeveloped peoples, and Imperialism are all its unsavoury fruits on the material plane. Nor are its fruits on the moral plane any better. Character, intelligence and ability are rigidly subordinated to wealth obtained by hook or by crook; greed is installed as the greatest of all virtues; uncertainty for mere physical existence and the fear of seeing one's wife and children in distress corrodes the joy of life; little and valueless objects called property imprison the infinite longings of the human soul.

This is, however, only one side of the picture. In the short period of a single century, capitalism has brought about an immeasurable increase in the wealth, knowledge and power of many countries. A few facts about the United States will be sufficient to indicate the immensity of the changes effected. In 1936, the average family income in the U. S. A. was estimated to be 2,200 dollars or about Rs. 600 per month at the present rate of exchange.

Actually over half the population had this average and 80 per cent had more than 1,000 dollars or Rs. 250 per month. There was one motor vehicle for every 5 persons, and every person used on an average 207 pieces of mail and consumed 89·2 pounds of sugar per annum. The figures for India were, one motor vehicle for 5,000 persons, 3 pieces of mail and 19 pounds of sugar per capita. As for the average family income, the maximum estimate made by the most optimistic economists in the pre-depression years was about Rs. 15 per month. It is not only in the abundance of material things we see this difference. In the U. S. A., the death-rate is 10·7 against 22·5 in India. The percentage of population between the ages of 5 and 20 attending school in U. S. A. was over 60 while here it was less than 10 per cent. The figures for the main industrial countries of Europe may be less than those of the United States but they are much nearer to them than to those of India. If Capitalism offered to India a degree of material prosperity anywhere near to that of the U. S. A. it would be necessary to consider carefully whether she might not take the well-trodden road instead of the new and untried path of socialism. It is a nice calculation whether such abounding material prosperity combined with individual freedom and initiative which capitalism gives to large sections of the population do not justify putting up with all the evils of capitalism. Fortunately or unfortunately,

India has no need to make this calculation. It is quite possible for her to build up many more industries but it is easy to demonstrate that through capitalism she cannot industrialise herself as much or as speedily as to raise the standard of life of her immense population to any considerable extent.

Detailed statistical investigation of the above proposition is altogether beyond the scope of this book. Nor is it necessary. The main facts stand out in such bold relief that there can be no doubt whatever about the conclusion. India's population according to the census of 1931 was 35 crores and it was increasing at the rate of about 1 per cent per year. It is better to think of this immense population in terms of families. The average Indian family consists of five persons. There are, therefore, 7 crores of families of which  $6\frac{1}{2}$  live in rural areas and  $\frac{1}{2}$  crore or 75 lakhs of families live in urban areas. A large part of even the latter live in small towns which are no more than bazaars for the surrounding villages. The number of workers in factories in all India in 1935 was 18 lakhs and this number has remained more or less stationary for the last ten years. Assuming only one effective worker for each family and allowing an additional 10 lakhs of workers for Railways, motor transport, etc., we get 28 lakhs of industrial workers out of 700 lakhs of workers or just 4 per cent. It is also obvious that India has no external markets for her industrial

products The maximum advantage she can obtain even from a national government with a severe protectionist policy is to secure the internal market. The expansion of the internal market depends on the increasing purchasing power of her population. This depends, so far as the bulk of the agricultural population is concerned, on (1) increase in the cultivated area, (2) increase in the yield of agriculture, (3) increase in the share allotted to the cultivators and (4) transference of workers from land to industry. Let us examine the possibilities of each.

Between 1921 and 1931, the cultivated area in British India increased by 160 lakhs of acres while the population increased by 250 lakhs. Hence, it would require an increase in the yield per acre even to maintain the same purchasing capacity of the ordinary agricultural family. The increased market for industrial products on this ground is not likely to be more than the proportionate increase in population. It is also evident that no phenomenal increase in the agricultural yield is possible unless modern large-scale agriculture is substituted for the present small holdings of 4 or 5 acres. This is impossible under the capitalist system. It will not pay the small farmer to modernise himself with borrowed capital and he will not voluntarily combine with others in order to do so. The market for industrial products cannot be appreciably increased in this way. It is quite possible to divert

industrial production from luxuries to necessities by transferring a larger slice of the produce of land to the cultivator and reducing the burdens of rent, interest and tax. But, this process can be carried only to a very limited extent in a capitalist system. Hence, capitalist development in India will be largely limited to the substitution of the present imports of manufactured goods. Our imports in recent years have been of the order of 140 crores out of which it may be assumed that 100 crores may be replaced. This will absorb about 10 lakhs of industrial workers. On the other hand, it is hardly likely that these workers and the new industries employing them will be able to absorb the shrinkage in exports of an equal amount. Thus we are caught in a vicious circle. The poverty of our people prevents industrialisation on a scale large enough to reduce the pressure on land substantially. Without such industrialisation, this poverty cannot be mitigated. Even in the U.S.A. where only 20 per cent live on land, the income of farmers is half of that of the urban population. Unless at least half the workers on land can be transferred to organised industries in India, the standard of life of the masses cannot be increased and capitalist industrialization will come to a dead stop as soon as it has replaced some of the imported commodities.

It will be asked naturally how then other countries were able to industrialise themselves. The

matter can best be understood by reflecting on the difference between India on the one hand and three typical industrial countries, Britain, U S A , and Japan

Britain's industrial greatness depends on many factors. She was the pioneer of the industrial revolution and had the advantage of the first comer. Her empire gave her the initial capital needed for a good start and still gives an assured market. Her profits have been invested all over the world and her income from shipping, banking and insurance is considerable. She is already facing acute competition in her export markets, her foreign investments are deteriorating rapidly and her empire is slowly but surely vanishing. It can hardly be imagined that without her export trade she would be able to maintain her present standard of life under a capitalist system. In any case, India cannot have her advantages.

The U S A depends mainly on the internal market, her exports of manufactured goods not being more than 5% of her production. But, they have twice the area of India and many times her natural resources with only a third of India's population. Thus, in coal and iron the respective resources are 22,769 and 87 tons per capita for U S A against 235 and 20 tons for India. It should also be remembered that when the U S A started on her industrial

career, her population was much smaller and it was possible to develop industry and agriculture simultaneously on modern lines. The immensity of her natural resources and the fortunate coincidence of large immigration with rapid industrial development have made her a great industrial country with almost a self-sufficient economy. No other country can hope to emulate her.

It is to Japan that India has to turn for a fair example of a densely populated agricultural country without large resources trying to industrialise herself under the capitalist system. The State has played a far greater part in the industrialisation of Japan than in Britain or America. In spite of her wonderful achievement, Japan has not been able to raise the standard of living of her masses much and after a desperate effort to capture export markets she has staked her all in her Imperialist adventure in China. No one will argue that India can imitate Japan in either of these two respects. It is also hardly likely that there will be ever in India a strong unitary national government which will give the same unstinted support and protection as in Japan. The rivalries of Provincial and State Governments and their reluctance to lose external markets for agricultural produce will set limits to any protectionist policy of the Federal Government.

For all these reasons, industrialisation on the capitalist model is not possible on any scale likely to

raise the standard of life in India to a level comparable to that of the industrial countries of the West. All that it can do is *still further* to enhance the difference between rural India and Industrial India, deepen the dissatisfaction of the rural masses and intensify the despair of the intelligentsia who are being manufactured in far greater numbers than can be absorbed by the slow rate of industrial development.



## CHAPTER III

### CAN WE GO BACK ?

In all the controversies between capitalism and socialism it is assumed that India has to choose one or the other. There are many Indians who refuse to accept this position. They consider it not so unfortunate that India is still in the stage of what is usually called medieval economy. As has been already noted only 4 per cent of her workers are in modern power industry. The rest are in agriculture or handicrafts. Why should they be disturbed from this position? Would it not be better to make this economy more complete by reviving all the handicrafts which have been thoughtlessly allowed to die out? Whatever the system of economy adopted, the average of less than one acre per head cannot be increased. The old system, in spite of its lack of glamour, has managed to feed the huge population of India without much trouble. Even during the great depression, the readjustment needed by the collapse of prices and the shrinkage of the external markets was made much more simply and satisfactorily in India than elsewhere. To dangle before the Indian people the examples of the U. S. A. and the U. S. S. R. is to make them discontented without the least prospect of coming anywhere near them. The resources of either in relation to their population

are so great that India will have to be a long way behind. The little material progress she may make either through capitalism or through socialism will be offset by the feeling of inferiority which will then be inevitable owing to the immensity of the population and the comparative poverty of our resources. Would it not be better and wiser not to engage in a race for which we are not fit and to find our satisfaction in a simple hardworking and contented life?

These are the principles on which the movements for the revival of handspinning and village handicrafts are founded. Mahatma Gandhi who is the inspiration behind both has carefully avoided dogmatising on these matters and has based his support on immediate necessity and practicability. Others like Mr Kumarappa, the Secretary of the All India Village Industries Association have tried to expound the theoretical implications of these movements.

College Professors steeped in Adam Smith, Ricardo and Marshall as well as ardent socialists full of Karl Marx and Soviet Russia may join in ridiculing this view as altogether reactionary and unacceptable. But, if they have an open mind they will have to admit that there is more truth in it than they are prepared to concede. It cannot be denied that till India gets not only the political freedom and the strength but also the unity

necessary to embark on a policy analagous to Japan, her industrialisation on the capitalist model will not be able even to absorb her increasing population in power industries, not to speak of relieving the tremendous pressure on land. Let us take one concrete example. By the addition of another lakh of power looms, half a crore of families now depending on the handloom will be thrown out of employment or on the overcrowded land. Nor can socialists deny that till they get political power to start plans on the Russian model, they are completely impotent.

The great merit of the khadi and the village industries movements is that they provide immediate scope for practical constructive work for everyone anxious to do something for the masses. Each item may appear to be small and the addition to national wealth insignificant but the cumulative increase in the standard of life may be considerable. From the aspect of distribution the plan is almost perfect as it contemplates production only for family consumption or for distribution in the immediate neighbourhood.

It would be wrong to say that the advocates of this movement want to do away with modern machinery altogether. They would keep it confined to spheres where simple manual labour cannot operate as in the case of mining, steel production or long distance transport. They would preserve the old economy for the masses and confine the inroads

of modern economy to the minimum extent needed to keep contact with the rest of the world

Enough has been said to show that the matter cannot be disposed of in a summary fashion by calling it medieval or reactionary. But there is one supreme consideration which decides the matter conclusively for all the parties concerned. It is only a socialist state in India which can preserve and foster cottage industries in the manner and to the extent needed. So long as the capitalist system is maintained, the village economy will be allowed to exist only to the extent that it is not profitable for an enterprising capitalist to destroy it. The experience of the All India Spinners' Association has demonstrated two things. To allow cottage industries to be run by the small capitalist is to have the worst of all systems. The worker is cruelly exploited on starvation wages, the consumer pays a high price and competition among the profiteers soon becomes suicidal and demoralising. By confining khadi production to official agencies under the control of the A. I. S. A., the Association has conceded the need for nationalisation. It should be clear to any one that only a socialist state in India can preserve the handloom till at least the weavers are absorbed in other occupations. In a later chapter, it will be demonstrated that in the circumstances likely to be available for this country in its evolution towards socialism, handicrafts and

cottage industries will have to play a large part in the transition period and at least some part even in the final picture. All that is necessary to say here is that the preservation of cottage industries in competition with large scale industries in a capitalist society is a hopeless impossibility. The zeal of owners of weaving mills for khadi is hypocritical in the extreme. Patriots pleading for protection to Indian textile mills on the one hand and growing lyrical over the charkha on the other are in a dubious position. Free trade and free competition between the power machine and manual labour in the production of the same commodity are impossible. It is only a socialist government that can allot the quotas, prices, fields of distribution and wages and ensure their being observed.

The maintenance, preservation and defence of any Government in India requires modern transport and armament. Nor can the blessings of electricity be denied to our masses however much simplicity may be desirable in other respects. Higher education presents another conundrum to wholehoggers of the manual labour theory. Either modern science has to be avoided or its applications should be prohibited. Neither is possible nor desirable. There can be no going back in any fundamental sense. But, there are some essential points of agreement between the socialists and the advocates of revival of rural economy. Both

agree that it is not right to let things alone and that a planned economy is needed. Both reject the capitalist hypothesis that the mere existence of profit for some one somewhere in an industry is positive proof that it is desirable that others should quietly face poverty and unemployment which may be caused by that industry. It is common ground that all the time the actual well-being of the masses is the sovereign test of any plan of reconstruction. All those who reject the theory of "laissez faire" are driven towards socialism in some form or other. Therefore, the dispute between the advocates of cottage industries and the so-called Marxian socialists lies not in the desirability of a socialist form of society but in the content of such society. It is necessary to repeat that it is a great mistake to imagine that all socialist states will be alike. They cannot be. Geography, climate, natural resources and the genius of the people will have as much play, if not more, in a socialist society as in the capitalist regimes. If Indian socialists go beyond the general slogans and imagine the actual construction of a socialist society in India and if the advocates of cottage industries try to analyse the indispensable conditions for the practical application of their schemes on a scale calculated to affect, say, one-fourth of the people of India, they will both come to a common agreement on the need for (1) complete political independence, (2) complete control of internal and external trade, and (3) a planning commission

with wide powers. If it is also realised that there is little scope for grave economic inequalities in India if even the lowest minimum of necessities is to be assured for all the 35 crores—it may be 40 by this time—of people, then the dispute relating to the relative parts of power and cottage industries recedes into the background and leaves the essential need for a socialist basis for our national reconstruction as a great and unifying factor.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY

Socialism can be most simply defined as Economic Democracy. The fundamental ideas underlying socialism are similar to and closely connected with those underlying political democracy. Unfortunately, notions of class war and the dictatorship of the proletariat are mixed up with socialism so intricately that even normally intelligent people are accustomed to speak of socialism and democracy as if they were alternatives or irreconcilable opposites. The socialist argument is that the division of society into economic classes which are hostile to one another forms the basic structure of capitalism and class-war is inherent in capitalist society. Socialism is put forward as the only means to avoid the class war. *Whether one accepts this interpretation of history or not, there is no excuse for thinking that class war has any organic connection with the structure or functioning of a socialist society.* The same is true of the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This is preached by the Marxians as the only effective means of establishing socialism. They assume as a self-evident proposition that the capitalist class will not give up its privileges through any non-violent or constitutional procedure and has



to be forcibly exterminated. How far this doctrine should be accepted or discarded will be discussed in the next chapter dealing with the methods of achieving socialism. Here, it is enough to point out that in a socialist society, there is neither proletariat nor dictatorship. Economic class distinctions are eliminated and dictatorship over any long period cannot exist without creating such distinctions.

What are the essential principles of political democracy? They are the sovereignty of the people, their active consent as the basis of government, and their regular and direct participation in the setting up and maintenance of the supreme organs of political power. It is wrong to say that there is or can be political equality for all people in the democratic or any other system of government. The gulf dividing the British Prime Minister and the American President from the ordinary voter in Britain and America is not less wide than that separating Hitler or Mussolini from the ordinary German or Italian citizen. The essential difference is that the rulers of Britain and the U. S. A. have to obtain formal approval after free discussion of their actions by their voters at stated periods. It may be that the dictators are often more in tune with their people and they may be more prompt in executing the national will in many matters. But dictatorship contains no peaceful

automatic check against gross abuse of power and presents to the people under it the dilemma of impotent acquiescence in wrong or the disaster of civil war

The claim of socialism is similar to that of democracy. It declares that wealth is a creation of society as a whole and should be used for the people by the people and through the people. There should be active and willing participation of the workers in the production, distribution and consumption of wealth. The main features which will be common to any scheme of socialist reconstruction are: (1) extinction of rent, interest and profit, (2) economic security, (3) Planning, (4) unlimited scope for the development of human and material resources and (5) establishment of self respect in the worker. It is necessary to discuss briefly each of these points.

It is wrongly assumed that there can be no private property under socialism. Property has two widely different purposes. One is to secure privacy, comfort and liberty for the individual. The other is to exact tribute from the propertiless. Socialism is not only not opposed to the first kind of property but is bound to promote it in a larger measure than the present system. If every citizen owns his house, house property will cease to have any value as investment. There is another misconception that socialism is opposed to saving. It is not. But, it is

wholly anti social to say that because a person postpones present expenditure, he should be paid a tribute besides being allowed to spend his saving in the future. The law of compound interest multiplies the savings of individuals and the foreign investments of nations without the individuals or nations doing any work beyond the slight temperance involved in the original thrift. But for the recklessness of human nature and the uncertainties of politics, a few miserly individuals in every country could become the owners of the bulk of the wealth of the country. Even as it is, most of the large fortunes in the world owe their size to interest more than to anything else. Profit in modern capitalism is only another form of interest. It has no relation to social utility or even to efficient management. It is easier to make profits in luxuries than in necessities. The armament industry is profitable in spite of the fact that huge amounts have to be paid as bribes to intermediaries. Ability to manipulate prices and markets is of more importance than economy of production. If the price of an American motor-car is three times in India of the factory price, what does it matter if its original cost of production is more or less by a few rupees? Rent, interest and profit all boil down to the same thing. The section of the community which has no property should pay tribute to the section which has, for no other reason than that the latter owns the property. No rational or equitable system can be built upon such a perverse principle.

*It is also the fashion among certain people to assume that absolute economic equality is an essential condition of socialism and to argue about its impossibility* Such mathematical equality is not attainable in any society Nor is it desirable from the standpoint of socialism Industry, intelligence, ability and the needs of particular work will produce inequalities in income under socialism as they do under capitalism But these inequalities will not grow like the snowball through compound interest or speculation The nationalisation of the instruments of production will remove the main cause of concentration of big fortunes in the hands of individuals or classes It is economic security rather than economic equality which will be the outstanding feature of socialist society Right to work and reasonable minimum wages combined with free education, medical relief and provision for old age, accidents and sickness will banish care which is perhaps the greatest evil of capitalist countries

Planning is an indispensable feature of socialism. But the method, the tempo and the scale of planning will differ from one socialist state to another according to resources and needs In a later chapter an attempt will be made to indicate the special features of socialist planning for India Under a capitalist system, economic planning is possible in a particular industry temporarily but general economic planning is inconsistent with its basic principle of automatic supply and demand

Capitalist economics has been correctly described as the economics of scarcity. Production is not limited by capacity for reasonable consumption but by the need for individual profit. The result is not only that millions have to go without proper food, clothing and housing but also a disastrous diversion of economic activity into unnecessary and harmful channels. The misdirection of cultural activity is not less baneful. On the one hand large numbers are left without education and artistic training while enormous effort is wasted in an impossible attempt to overload the brains and overstrain the emotions of the propertied classes. It is only through a socialist system that the material and spiritual resources of the entire people can be fully developed.

Medieval life had one great compensation for the agriculturist and artisan for the comparatively meagre wages they got. They could have a real pride and interest in their work. Capitalism has struck at the root of the self-respect of the worker. The time spent by the industrial worker in his factory has meaning only in the wages he gets. Otherwise, it is sheer slavery for the employee. He has, therefore, to clutch eagerly at his leisure hours as the sole part of useful existence as a human being. This evil is, perhaps, inherent in any large-scale industry. But under socialism, the worker will feel towards his factory much as the voter feels towards his ministers in a democratic government. He may

grumble and criticise but he will also feel that the work and the fruit thereof is as much his as that of anybody else

Political and economic democracy are not only parallel but also closely connected. Neither can have full development without the other. Capitalism means plutocratic oligarchy in the field of economics and even adult franchise cannot establish complete political democracy under the patronage of such an oligarchy. The vote is effective only to the extent it confiscates the profits of the capitalists. In Britain and many other countries this has taken the form of high taxation for free social services. The logical end of this process is nationalisation of big industries and the establishment of a socialist order. Conversely, given economic democracy, political democracy is bound to follow. That is why the political constitution of Soviet Russia is formally at least completely democratic though the dictatorship of Stalin and the Communist Party are still monopolising the reality of political power. The nationalist Imperialist and militarist dreams which seem to be stirring in the rulers of Russia are signs that political democracy is being too long delayed and that Soviet Russia is facing the danger of a reversion to state capitalism which seeks to exploit the workers for power and glory. It is in this sense that the Nazi and Bolshevik regimes appear to be alike though they are at opposite ends.

## CHAPTER V

### THE ROADS TO SOCIALISM

The most acute controversies regarding socialism relate not to the relative merits of Capitalism and Socialism but to the roads which lead from one to the other. The communists hold that there is no other road than a violent mass revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is in this part of the doctrine that scientific thinking has been superseded by religious fanaticism. It is natural though regrettable. The doctrine of Marx was not only an attempt at a new analysis but also a programme of action. The latter cannot be conducted if the doctrine is to be continually modified by new thought and experience. The strength as well as the weakness of the communist lie in this idea of a single road to socialism through the dark and dismal seas of persecution and hatred. It has a powerful appeal to the discontented and the disinherited. It has the appearance of logical simplicity. The possessing classes will not give up unless forced to do so by superior physical force. So let them be killed and socialism established.

The Russian Revolution has done two things. It has proved that the danger of an economic mass revolution as more feasible exists more in the

backward countries than in the advanced industrial countries. The explanation is simple. The standard of life of the worker in the latter is far greater than in the former. The proletariat does not exist in the advanced countries except in the imagination of the communist propagandist. The gradations among the workers are so great that the superior and skilled workers have to be called bourgeois and classed with the employers. The capitalist class has similarly spread out. The big trusts and companies are formed with the savings of workers to a considerable extent. Social insurances and unemployment reliefs have blunted the edge of despair of the most unfortunate. Another effect of the Russian Revolution has been to put the fear of the poor in the minds of the rich. The capitalist classes are now both eager and willing to yield much. It is no doubt true that they will prefer to fight if they are to be uprooted overnight and thrown on the streets. If human consideration is given to them there are no insuperable obstacles to a peaceful evolution of socialism.

The history of bourgeois democracy adds powerful support to this conclusion. The Divine Right of Kings was held much more tenaciously than the belief in the divine right of property is held today. The middle classes who were fired with the ideas of democracy and freedom were smaller than the supporters of socialism now. A



French revolution was necessary to put an end finally to absolute monarchy which has had a longer history than modern capitalism. But, once that revolution had taken place, democracy spread swiftly without any need of its repetition in other countries. The Soviet Revolution has put an end to the doctrine of absolute sanctity of private property. It is therefore criminal folly to propagate the idea that the only road to socialism hereafter is through a violent revolution.

The conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat is a necessary sequel to that of a proletarian revolution. The two go together. It happens, however, that in India and many other countries socialists think in terms of such a dictatorship even when they are convinced that a proletarian revolution is not possible or desirable. They want to sharpen class antagonisms and call for sudden confiscations. The failure of socialist groups all over Europe is due to their professions of belief in peaceful socialist evolution with secret hopes of a violent breakdown. The Congress Socialist Party in India is in a similar confusion. It cannot make up its mind that a violent proletarian revolution is impossible in India and a plan of peaceful evolution has to be worked out. At the same time, it does not believe that a revolution is possible in the near future. It is no wonder that it speaks with many voices and prefers to play at party politics to elaborating its vision and perfecting its method.

Whether other countries have a choice between peaceful evolution and a violent revolution or not, India has none. She has to achieve socialism through non-violence or forego it altogether for a long time. To arrive at this conclusion, it is not necessary to believe in the abstract virtues of non-violence. Indian people are wholly disarmed. Even the establishment of a responsible central government is not likely to alter this fact. The economic class divisions in India are cut through and through by no less powerful religious, racial and cultural divisions. The industrial workers form an insignificant portion of the population and the agricultural masses are traditionally contented and peaceful. Not a single requisite for either conducting a violent revolution or maintaining it during transition exists. It appears to be a sheer waste of time to dream of a revolution for which the objective conditions are so wholly absent.

On the other hand, all the conditions for a peaceful evolution towards socialism are present. There are less than 5 lakhs of income-tax assesses in India, and of them only a lakh pay income-tax on an income of Rs. 5,000 and over. In many provinces, land is already widely distributed. In Madras for instance out of 37 lakhs of ryotwari pattas, only 1,100 paid a kist of over Rs. 1,000 and 2,500 over Rs. 500. Over two-thirds of the holdings were owned by small holders paying Rs. 50 or less of land revenue per year. The zamindars in India

are weak, incompetent and incapable of organised resistance. The intelligentsia is itself in a precarious position and will enthusiastically support a peaceful attempt at socialist reconstruction while its attitude towards the other method will be extremely doubtful if not positively hostile.

If Indian socialists discard the idea of a proletarian revolution without any mental reservation, they will bridge the gulf which now separates their thoughts and actions and convert them from their present role of confusing obstructionists into a group of dynamic thinkers and politicians. Ideas, plans and technique which are appropriate for a violent revolution have no place in a peaceful movement. Unfortunately, the word 'revolution' has so much emotional significance that its use to denote radical changes cannot be avoided.

When it is said that a violent revolution is not possible, it does not mean that no force is necessary or available. Legislation is the civilised method of using force after the majority have been persuaded. A socialist society will have to be brought about by the cumulative effects of legislation over a considerable period. The possibility of local and general outbreak if the possessing classes resist too much or too long will exercise a continual pressure. Non-violent direct action will do its part.

In this connection, it is necessary to dispel the notion that Civil Disobedience, Satyagraha and

other forms of non-violent direct action are substitutes to a violent revolution. They are not. They are merely intensive forms of propaganda or constitutional agitation. The actual changes will have to be brought about through the instruments of power, direct revolutionary force or legislation. Hence, those who despise legislation and praise non-violent direct action do not know what they are talking about. The latter can effect no material changes by itself though it may be a powerful means to rally public opinion in favour of such changes.

It is obvious that the tempo of any reconstruction brought about by non violent and constitutional means will be much slower than that of a violent revolution. At the same time the transition will be smoother and much wastage and suffering will be avoided. It is fashionable to ridicule reformism. But, in the absence of a violent revolution, it cannot be avoided. It does not mean that the attempt at each step should be small or insignificant. The purpose of this book is to indicate the successive stages of a socialistic reconstruction of India through non violent and legislative action.

Three assumptions underlie the rest of this book. They are (1) no proletarian revolution is possible in India in the next few generations; (2) the road of capitalism cannot bring about any considerable change in the economic condition of the Indian

masses, (3) socialistic reconstruction through peaceful means is both possible and desirable. In these preliminary chapters, an attempt has been made to provide a rational basis for these assumptions. But it cannot be expected that any assumption can be conclusive till it is justified by actual experience. All that can be done is to show that a peaceful attempt can be devised which does not expect the impossible from human nature as it is found in India and which will, if successful, lead to a real socialist society. That society will not be an imitation or a replica of Soviet Russia. It will retain a powerful impress of the different road taken. It may exhibit a more complicated pattern and include a larger range of values, material and spiritual. It may appear poorer and humbler but it will be gentler. The essential purpose and achievement will be the same, viz, the extinction of exploitation of man by man, the abolition of caste and the provision of equal opportunities for the unfolding of every child.

## PART 2

### THE AGRARIAN FRONT

#### CHAPTER VI

#### WHERE AND HOW TO BEGIN?

Peaceful Socialism will also consist of three fronts, the agrarian, industrial and the social and cultural. But, the order, the emphasis and the tempo will be very different from the activity after a violent revolution. In the latter case, industry, and heavy industry in particular, will demand the first attention and the greatest sacrifice. The increase in the number of industrial workers and the building of the capacity for defence against external aggression and internal reaction will be the most urgent needs to be met. The position will be the reverse in a peaceful and constitutional attempt at socialistic reconstruction. It is the agrarian problem which will have to be tackled first. This does not mean that the other two fronts may be neglected. All will have to be faced simultaneously. But a rapid reconstruction of our rural economy will be an essential condition for the popular support and the material resources needed for the other two fronts.

There can be no summary confiscations, arbitrary persecutions or forcible impositions in evolutionary

socialism. The capitalistic classes will have to be dealt with gently and converted into active workers for socialism with the least possible resistance. This will require a whole generation. No five year plans will do. There should be a 25 or 30 year plan. The ends to be achieved and the procedure to be followed will have to be settled and the machinery created from the start. But those who have to lead and control the transformation must not be fanatics obsessed with particular fads but men of scientific temperament willing to try experiments likely to lead to the goal and shape events by a careful analysis of the results achieved.

It is the agrarian front which will have to be concentrated upon in the opening stages. It is easy to outline the result to be achieved on this front. Private property in agricultural land in the sense of involving the rights of sale, mortgage and other alienation should disappear. The flow of labour into and away from agriculture should be regulated so as to continually increase the total production and the earnings of the agricultural worker as well as the portion available for social and cultural services. At every point where corporate action is necessary, as in the supply of manures, sale of produce and the *ensuring of quality and purity of seed*, the machinery for such action with the requisite resources should be created. Large scale and small scale agriculture should be tried side by side and the results studied with an open mind. Labour-saving machines and

## INDIA'S ROAD TO SOCIALISM

services should be introduced in proportion to the new work made available either through deep wells or irrigation schemes or through the development of industries and social services. Dislocation and unemployment should be avoided at every stage and the standard of life should not be allowed to fall even temporarily.

The above recital may appear to be formidable and impracticable. But if it is remembered that the change is sought to be brought about in a generation, that practically the entire population is living on agriculture and the standard of life is very low, the programme sketched above will be admitted to be reasonable by any one who wants to establish socialism in this country. For those who are against the purpose itself, every attempt to change the present scheme of economic relations will appear wrong, impracticable and unjust.

The course agrarian reform may be expected to take in any attempt at non violent socialism will be sketched in the next chapter. In the rest of this chapter, an attempt will be made to sketch the machinery needed to bring about the changes.

Political Democracy both at the centre and the provinces is a condition precedent. It is also necessary that the Provincial units will neither be too large nor too restricted in their powers to conduct the transformation. While for such matters as defence, general democratic liberties and Railways



India is a convenient unit, it is too large and too thickly populated for social experiments. Any failure will be attended with great misery. Even very big provinces will be a handicap. An unit of from 15 to 20 millions may be very convenient. Linguistic redistribution of India may generally provide this basis though Bengal, United Provinces and Bihar may require further division.

The Provincial Legislature will have to be on a representative basis and it will have to be the organ for providing the fundamental legal basis for the new reconstruction. But within that basis there should be a great deal of power and initiative to the primary organs of the people. The direct participation of the people at every stage of reconstruction is necessary. Hence it is the village and municipal organs of rural and urban self-government that should be the formal authorities to carry out the agrarian and the cultural parts of the programme. The Provincial Government will take charge of all big industries and advanced technical and university education. Other intermediary organisations in the Taluks and Districts may be needed but they should be advisory and co-ordinating agencies without any original executive functions.

The use of the term Soviet will be convenient to convey the idea of the proper village organisation needed. But, it would be a pity if the discussion is to be sidetracked by Russian terminology and the

word Panchayat may do instead. But the Panchayat needed for socialism will be more like the Provincial Government than the pale ghosts which pass under that name. Ultimately, it will own all the land and house sites, it will collect the taxes and pay the village services, it will own the plants and power machinery as well as the communal buildings like schools, parks and godowns. It will regulate the building of houses and the settling down of new agriculturists and artisans in the village and mete out justice in ordinary disputes and minor criminal offences.

Besides being elected by adult suffrage, the voters should meet at least once a month to hear an account of the work of the Panchayat and the Panchayat should be removable if an absolute majority censures them on a referendum taken at the request of a reasonable fraction of the electorate. The Panchayat should be free to tax the people in any way it liked subject to an appeal to a higher authority against oppressive and unreasonable taxation.

The Municipalities in urban areas will also have very large powers and functions. They will own all buildings of public resort, including hotels, and cinemas, run their own transport and power house and as regard local self government, will be more like the free cities of medieval Europe. In big cities with large suburban populations the powers

may have to be delegated to subordinate bodies. It is to the opinion of the electorate and not to the Provincial Government that the Municipality should look to support. The present system of grants should go and every city should tax itself for its needs and earn the balance needed by remunerative services to the citizens and the people of the neighbourhood. Methods like the Recall and Referendum can be advantageously applied to the municipalities to keep the representatives in close touch with the feelings of the people. The Municipalities should be free to run banks, insurance companies and other industrial undertakings with the permission of the Provincial Government.

Both the village Panchayats and the town councils will have three departments, political, economic and judicial. They will be administered by standing committees through permanent staff recruited by the Panchayat or the Municipality but from among those certified by the Provincial Government as qualified for the post.

The Provincial Government will no doubt continue in charge of its police functions but its main business will be banking, power transport, electricity and power industry. What kind of machinery will have to be devised for the purpose and how the capital for these as well as the enterprises of the village Panchayats and the Municipalities should be found will be indicated in a later chapter.

In the Russian experiment, great efforts have been taken to enlist popular support and encourage local initiative. But, the class war, the secret police and the overwhelming power of the central authorities have had a paralysing effect. It should be the special feature of peaceful socialist revolution to educate and persuade the people at every point in the process.

## CHAPTER VII.

### NATIONALISATION OF LAND.

Nationalisation of agricultural land must form the secure basis of Indian socialism. Not only at present but, perhaps, for all time, the majority of the Indian people will have to work in agriculture. Agricultural rent is among the worst and most unproductive forms of exploitation of man by man. At the same time, there can be no confiscation of the present land owning classes without a violent revolution. The only alternative seems to be to extinguish property rights in agricultural land by payment of compensation. Is this possible ?

It is necessary to remember some basic facts for the purpose of this chapter. The total available land in British India in 1935-36 was 51 crores of acres. Of these, 16 crores were not available for cultivation. 26 crores were either sown or were current fallow and nine crores were culturable waste. Just over 5 crores of acres were irrigated. To state it briefly, there is one acre per capita of cultivated land and another third of an acre of cultivable waste. There are no doubt variations from Province to Province but the general situation is the same and the main arguments will hold good for all, though adjustments in detail may be necessary.

Supposing a compensation of Rs 50 per acre is given for unirrigated land and Rs 100 for irrigated land the amount necessary will be 1,550 crores. It would be impossible for the Governments in India to get this sum in cash. It would be no doubt possible to give bonds carrying no interest and payable in a number—say thirty—of instalments. Though this may appear simple on paper, it would be rather complicated in operation as it makes no distinction between those who cultivate their own land and who those merely receive rent or cultivate through hired labour. It would also bind the state to secure all rent receivers for a long period from the vicissitudes of the seasons. A simpler and more elastic scheme may be adopted as follows

All proprietary interests in agricultural land should be declared to be extinguished on a particular date twenty five or thirty years hence. Meanwhile, the proprietary interests will be protected in their present enjoyment of rights. It should be open to any village Panchayat to take over any estate on giving the undertaking to pay the customary rent for the remaining period of the transition. It should also be the duty of the Panchayat to take over any estate on the same condition if the proprietor is not resident in the village and wants to divest himself of his rights. State banks will be established through which the payment of instalments will be made by the Panchayats.

Such a scheme will be easy and flexible. It will enable the Panchayats to take over the lands of absentee landlords, big landlords and others at such times and in such order as they may find convenient. It would not amount to confiscation as it would be equal to payment of thirty years' rent without interest. It gives the landholding classes plenty of time to readjust themselves and if the governments make a determined effort to train the sons and daughters of these classes to become efficient agricultural, industrial, social and technical workers, active co-operation may be expected from large sections of these very classes. Landed property will not be taken away by force. It will simply melt away slowly and imperceptibly without causing much suffering. Even now, few middle class landholders are able to hold on to their estates for more than a generation. The Hindu law of partition, marriages and funerals and modern education have made landed property as transient as cash or stocks and shares. Many legal questions like partition and the rights of existing mortgages will arise. There is no need to go into them in a work which merely indicates the general principles. But, all such questions can be solved on the assumption that landed property consists of thirty instalments of customary rent.

Nationalisation is by itself a negative operation. It merely lifts the load of unproductive burdens on land. Actual reconstruction of agriculture is bound

to be a more complicated task. Still, even here, it would be certainly advantageous to have as little dislocation as possible. The figures given in this chapter show that on an average there is one acre per head or five acres per family. It would be a reasonable ideal to hope that ultimately half the families will be agriculturists while the rest will be distributed in industrial, social, transport and other occupations. It would be wise to conserve all holdings between five to fifteen acres, consolidate them and assure the present cultivators that their families will have a permanent and hereditary right of cultivation in those holdings subject to regulations regarding methods, crops and marketing. They will not be able to sell, mortgage or alienate their rights and the holdings will be indivisible. Some system of primogeniture or other form of succession will have to be devised. It would be equally useful to preserve the larger estates. Only, instead of being private property they will be held as a state farm or as an indivisible and inalienable co-operative farm of all the families working on the farm at the time of nationalisation.

All cultivation will be organised on these lines. It would be necessary to make the small cultivators conform to the instructions of the economic committee of the Panchayat regarding the crops, manuring and other matters. The use of power machinery and electricity will first be tried on the large farms and adapted after thorough experience



to the small farms by a system of hiring, the machines being owned by the Panchayat.

One of the incidental but far-reaching consequences of this reorganisation will be that it provides an automatic control over the number of agricultural workers. It would force the Panchayat and the higher authorities to calculate and make provision for surplus workers due to increasing population and consolidation of holdings. There are still 9 crores of acres of cultivable waste which may provide work for a crore of families. It goes without saying that all alienation of these lands should be prohibited from the start. As they would presumably be of poorer soil to remain uncultivated so long in this country, they would be more suitable for large-scale farming than for small holdings. But even after bringing them into cultivation, there would be surplus workers if the present wastage of labour on agriculture is eliminated. Control of population and their systematic diversion into productive channels of work will have greater importance in India than in less thickly populated countries. The matter will be dealt with in a later chapter. But the maintenance of village statistics regarding residents and their occupation is essential for every part of reconstruction. In fact, it should be the foremost duty of the village panchayat and the municipality. The national registers which have been compiled in many European countries for the purposes of war may serve as models.

It is inevitable that there should be a number of landless agricultural labourers in every village. Though the small holding of five to ten acres may not be enough for a family, the work on them during certain seasons may be more than the members can cope with. It would be a great advantage if the artisans and other village workers can combine this work with their own normal occupations. Still, loose workers may be found necessary and an honourable place must be found for them. Their wages should be regulated and they should be protected from unfair or unrestricted competition from similar workers from other villages.

A rough picture of the changes that would take place in the Province of Madras if the above reorganisation is completed may serve to give a concrete idea of the scheme. The figures given are only broad estimates as no accurate statistics are available. Out of about 90 lakhs of families constituting the population of Madras, nearly 60 lakhs are engaged in cultivation. Half the number have got the minimum holdings suggested in this chapter while the rest are almost equally divided between the classes of tenants and landless agricultural labourers. Under the scheme of this chapter, the owner-cultivators will continue in their holdings which will be consolidated and made inalienable. The bulk of the tenants will join this class as soon as the instalments of the former proprietors are paid out. The landless labourers will become

partners in large scale co-operative or state farms except for a few lakhs of families who will continue as free landless labourers with an enhanced status and standard of living. Between one and two lakhs of rent receivers will lose their present means of livelihood during the generation in which the change takes place but as will be shown in subsequent chapters they will resume their place in village economy as teachers, health workers, accountants and mechanics. The changes effected may appear to be not very revolutionary after all. In the sense that the successors of the present generation will generally continue where their parents are now, this is quite true. But the basic structure would have been radically altered. Speculation, absentee landlordism and idle rent-receiving would have disappeared. The economic status as well as the standard of living of the tenants and landless agricultural labourers would have risen. The fruits of improved cultivation would go automatically to the entire agricultural population. The rent receivers also would not be worse off. Instead of being unwanted and hated parasites, they would have become indispensable skilled workers whose chances of individual prosperity will lie in the general increase of production. Instead of being the relics of a dead past they will become the heralds of the future. If the plan is fairly put before them, the sons and daughters of the land-owning classes will become its

ardent champions. Their education and intelligence will be enlisted in the cause of socialism, while, in the event of a violent revolution, they will inevitably turn into anti-revolutionaries however much they may like to flirt with the idea when it is far away.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### AGRICULTURAL REORGANISATION.

Nationalisation is only one part of the reorganisation needed to put Indian agriculture on a sound footing. It will merely lift the unproductive load upon it. Unless the methods of production, preservation, storage and marketing are carefully planned and the prices judiciously controlled and regulated the standard of life cannot materially rise. It is fortunate that such reorganisation will not be unduly dependent on foreign markets. India's export trade is considerable, being of the order of 150 crores. But the main agricultural exports are tea, jute, cotton and oilseeds. These comprise about 15 per cent of the cultivated area. Except for a 5 per cent import of rice, India is self-sufficient in food and fodder. It has been demonstrated in many countries that prices in the internal market can be controlled without much difficulty.

In the earlier stages at any rate, no attempt should be made to restrict the export trade. With political freedom our foreign obligations will diminish and many of the articles now imported will be substituted by local manufactures. But machinery and machine tools will be required to a far greater extent than now and it is not likely that this

country will ever be a large exporter of manufactured goods. Soviet Russia has demonstrated that a socialist state can conclude trade agreements and conduct its foreign trade as efficiently, if not more, as a capitalist state.

A large part of our agricultural production is directly consumed. There is immense scope for advance in this connection. Cultivation of vegetables, bee and poultry keeping must go hand in hand with an intensive propaganda for increased home consumption of the produce. In certain favourable areas, they may be produced for urban markets. But ordinarily the Indian village is not likely to produce more of vegetables, honey and eggs than will be necessary for the proper nutrition of its residents. It is true that in certain seasons there may be a surplus while in others there may be scarcity. Large quantities of vegetables and fruits are being wasted which ought to be preserved.

Much is being said about dairy produce. Well equipped and well conducted dairies for urban areas are urgently needed. But it is not good to encourage the idea of indiscriminate production and sale of dairy produce. The farmer is always anxious to deprive his own children of milk in order to get cash for knick knacks. The immediate problem in India so far as cattle are concerned is to eliminate the unfit and improve the breeds. The problem of fodder is acute in many places. While every

peasant should be asked to keep a good cow, the practice of keeping superfluous dry cows and useless cattle should be ended. In this connection Gandhi's contention that in the conditions in India where the people are largely vegetarian and reluctant to destroy animal life, and even non-vegetarians do not eat cattle flesh, a concentrated attempt should be made to preserve only the cow and the bull and let the buffalo and other animals die out deserves to be carefully examined. The population of India has reached a size at which the extension of fodder crops can be only at the expense of human food crops and the former has to be limited to the minimum needed for agricultural and nutritional purpose. The elimination of inferior breeds is equally important but provision of food for the existing cattle comes first. One of the serious difficulties in India which prevents the eliminations of poor cattle is the need to plough up quickly all the land in an area soon after the rains. From this point of view, mechanical ploughing in dry areas may play a vital part in reducing the burden of unfit cattle.

It is in the solution of the problems of manuring, rotation of crops and selection of seed that Indian agriculture has to look to increasing the yields which are admittedly poor. Under a system of uncontrolled small scale farming, little progress can be expected in any of these directions. With the wide variations of seasons and fear of drought and flood, the ordinary

agriculturist has to take heavy risks in trying to manure his fields properly. A system of insurance which will protect him against loss in such contingencies has to be devised and worked. Russian experience in this matter shows that it is not impracticable.

Marketing is important but the present deficiencies are exaggerated. The formulation and maintenance of uniform standards of weights and measures and the building of godowns and warehouses at all important centres will facilitate the movement of trade and lessen the middleman's charges. Ultimately co-operative agencies will take over marketing. But, there need be no hurry in disturbing the existing agencies. Control of prices will provide sufficient security for the producer and the consumer and subject to strict regulation, private agencies may be more necessary and useful in this field than in others.

The world depression has demonstrated how mere price variations can upset the economic equilibrium of a country, destroy the purchasing power of the agriculturist more disastrously than any failure of harvests. The danger will not be absent in a socialist economy. Price control will be no easy task as it will then involve the economic relations between the Provinces and States and between the different parts of a Province or State. No rigid fixation of prices is possible. It can be done only by



an All-India agency which is bound to be very slow and diffident. It would not, however, be difficult to formulate maximum and minimum prices based on the cost of production and maintained by judicious manipulation of Railway freights and export and import duties. In the present war all the belligerents and many of the neutral countries are adopting measures to control prices and their experience will be invaluable to India.

Irrigation is already a government monopoly so far as rivers and big tanks are concerned. But well irrigation has been left to the peasants who are unable to keep them in proper order and to instal economic lifts. It is also the bitter experience of many peasants that their wells dry up when a neighbour digs a new well. The possibilities of deep well irrigation and the use of electricity for water-lifting have to be fully explored. The present use of plough cattle for water-lifting is an important element of our agricultural economy and may not be discarded even if it is shown that power-lifting will by itself be more economical. One of the greatest evils of the primitive capitalist system now existing is that changes are allowed to take place in some parts without any idea of their reactions on the rest. There are two guiding principles which have to be continually borne in mind in any attempt at peaceful social revolution. There should be no increase in unemployment and the standard of life should continually increase. This involves that

labour-saving devices will be introduced only to the extent that the surplus labour will be employed productively elsewhere and that the standard of life of no section will be allowed to deteriorate in the present under the pleasant delusion that everybody will be better off in the end. These are the tests which should decide the question whether there should be any change of methods and tools in agriculture and cottage industries. A fuller discussion relating to the application of science and power machinery will be found in a later chapter.

Accounting and financial arrangements are bound to be more complicated in a socialist economy. The only accounts that are kept in the village to-day are those regarding the land revenue and the fields. A socialist panchayat will have to maintain accurate accounts of the costs of production and the sales of produce. It will also have to keep registers of workers employed and unemployed. Something like a village balance sheet will have to be prepared which will make comparisons with other villages possible and will indicate the fluctuations in the fortunes of the village from year to year. With nationalisation of land, private banking will cease in the villages and the short-term and long-term credit needs of the agriculturists will have to be met by some other way. The latter should be treated like the public debt of a Municipal Corporation while the former can be managed by a local co-operative society guaranteed by the panchayat.

## CHAPTER IX.

### HOUSING AND VILLAGE PLANNING.

It is, perhaps, in the field of housing and village planning that socialist reconstruction can achieve immediate and sensational results. It is perhaps no exaggeration to say that nine out of every ten villages in India deserves to be completely destroyed and rebuilt. This is not such a dreadful thing as it might appear at first sight. Most of the houses are miserable huts not fit even for animals. They are generally built pellmell without proper provision for kitchen, garden, manure pits or cattlesheds. Moreover, many of the villages have remained in their sites so long that the wells have become brackish.

11 per cent of the people of India are in urban areas according to the census of 1931. Many of the so called urban areas are in the same position as the villages. If India is to appear clean and decent no less than six crores of new houses will have to be built and the layout of most of the villages will have to be radically altered and improved if not entirely laid anew.

It is quite possible to build a decent cottage to suit the climatic conditions of India for about Rs. 500. At this rate, the housing scheme will cost.

the huge total of Rs 3,000 crores Can we attempt it ? If the problem is analysed into its elements, it does not appear so formidable Except nails, iron bars and a small quantity of cement for flooring, housing requires only wood, bricks, and labour The last three can be obtained locally and Government forests will supply any shortage of timber. Far from being an economic burden on the community the housing programme will be the easiest means of utilising productively the enormous resources of idle labour which are annually going to waste There are already enough carpenters, masons and other artisans to begin with and new vocational schools to train others will automatically spring up The students of engineering colleges will find ample work in directing and supervising the work

It is not difficult to imagine how the work can be planned out First of all, the possibilities of reorganising each village on its present site will have to be thoroughly investigated Where this is possible, a plan should be drawn up on the basis that each village will have its public buildings, park, playground, electric lighting, water supply and drainage Additional ground needed will be acquired on the basis suggested for the nationalisation of agricultural land. In other words, if the land is yielding any rent or income at present, the panchayat will undertake to pay the rent for the next thirty years If it is mere waste land, it will be taken without any compensation The roads,

park and play-ground will be formed to start with. Then a programme of building will be formulated starting with the classes which are most poorly housed at present, viz., the landless labourers. Annually five to ten houses will be built and they will be communal property while the right of residence is guaranteed to every permanent resident. The whole scheme should be completed by the time agricultural land is wholly nationalised.

How is the scheme to be financed? A special labour tax of, say, twelve days' labour on every adult in the village may be levied for this scheme. The middle classes in the village should be allowed to commute it into money and in the case of artisans, the men folk should be allowed to do work on behalf of their women. Assuming there are 600 people in a village, it will require about 120 houses of which probably 20 are already existing at present in a suitable condition. At the rate of 4 new houses a year, the village will be housed completely in 25 years at an annual expenditure of Rs. 2,000. Allowing another Rs. 500 for public works, the total amount required will be Rs. 2,500 a year. Half of this will be labour charges to be contributed directly by labour taxation and the other half will have to be met partly by village taxation and partly by loans. As the rents and the profits of landholders will terminate at the end of thirty years, the repayment of the loans may

start then    The agriculturist can afford to pay house rent then

There should be no difficulty in providing two modern amenities to every village, viz, electric lighting and the radio. The cost of kerosene oil consumed should ordinarily be sufficient to meet the electric charges. Even if it costs more, electric lighting will give an entirely new appearance and outlook to the village. The radio will not cost much and will become the most powerful means of educating the people to play their part in the new scheme of reconstruction. With these, the villagers will be almost on a level with the town-dwellers, the lesser money-incomes being compensated by quiet and fresh air.

A powerful reason for starting with the housing plan is that no conflict of interest can arise over it and it will be a great asset to any plan of peaceful reconstruction that all the people can co-operate in it with genuine enthusiasm. This country has also a genius for such programmes. In many districts of Tamilnad, every village has many temples which should have cost immense effort. Socialism cannot start better than by instilling a feeling that every place where a human being dwells is a temple. The steady raising of new houses for those who had never hoped for them will fill the masses with new hope and energy and assure them that a new era is beginning. It will not cause any dislocation in any

other part of the programme relating to agriculture or industry. It will not be merely material construction but will be the symbolic reconstruction of a new civilization on a new plane

Vegetable gardening, horticulture, raising of fruit trees and ornamental plants and creepers form necessary adjuncts to village planning. Planting of trees for purposes of shade, fuel and public avenues was common in ancient India. Sufficient attention has not been devoted to it in recent times. It should be taken up seriously. The greatest asset of this country is its share of sunlight and nothing should be left undone to convert it into health, beauty and joy. Though many sections of the upper classes have developed delicate tastes for flowers, music and other arts, it should be confessed that the majority has been left in the cold. Only religion has tried to lift them from the most rudimentary physical existence. If one says to the peasant that he should eat fruit every day and that his wife should wear flowers he will consider the speaker as an amiable crank. But nothing can be easier. Plantains, cocoanuts, papias, and several other fruit trees grow easily and the mango is almost an universal fruit in India. Indian flowers have fragrant odours and every season has its flower.

Village planning involves the employment of skilled technicians. For every group of five or six villages, there should be a civil engineer, an electrical engineer, an agricultural organiser with necessary

staff and equipment Educational, medical and sanitary organisation will be dealt with later It may be asked how the poor villages can afford to pay for them Three factors should be borne in mind in this connection These skilled workers will not expect in a socialist society the present scales of pay The villages are at present bearing the burden of land revenue and that of the idle land owning classes It would be the object of socialist policy to leave the land revenue as is done today in many capitalist countries and finance the Provincial Government from a charge on the organised industries like power transport electricity etc and general taxes like the sales tax The gradual transfer of the land revenue to the village panchayat will enable them to build up these essential services and when the nationalisation of land is complete the peasants will be able to pay for the social services. The annual land revenue of the Province of Madras is over Rs 6 crores Assuming that the rents paid to zamindars and other non working landholders is no more than an equal amount, there will be Rs 12 crores a year which may be divided half and half between the cultivators and the village social services This calculation does not take into account the improved production due to these services Still it gives for each group of five villages in the province a sum of Rs 6,000 which ought to suffice for the new services

It will be noticed that this scheme of village reconstruction will automatically bring about a



reorganisation in our system of education. The deep distrust which exists regarding this system, its causes and how it can be removed will be dealt with in a later chapter. It is enough to state here that the supply of workers for the three fronts will be the main work of the secondary and university education while primary education will consist of the exposition of the actual planning that is going on and with which the children will be associated in many ways.

## CHAPTER X

### COTTAGE INDUSTRIES

Ever since the beginning of the khadi movement the problem of cottage industries has received much attention in this country. Capitalist industrialism took in this country as in others the line of least resistance. It began with the textiles. Besides plentiful material and cheap labour, it was able to enlist the patriotic feelings of the people. British Imperialism was inextricably connected with the ruin of the most important handicrafts of spinning and weaving. The latter played a vital part in the rural economy of the country. Spinning gave employment to the agriculturists during the off seasons. In many parts of India, no agricultural operations are possible till the monsoons. There are also vacant months after the sowing. The leisure period ranges from four to eight months. Spinning naturally filled up this time. The extra income was very important even if it merely clothed the families of the spinners. How this should have fitted in with the village economy of India can be explained with the aid of a few elementary figures. A spinner can spin per day enough yarn of 13 16 counts for one yard of cloth. For an average Indian family of five, about 60 yards would have been used. This would require sixty days of spinning and when

the cotton belonged to the spinner another 30 days' production of yarn will suffice to pay the weaving charges. Where the cotton had to be bought more work had to be done to pay for it but it would not have taken more than four months of spare time for the family to clothe itself with a single spinner. Actually, most of the female members including small girls would spin as the art is very simple and the labour light. Hence the burden of spinning would have been light while it was an easy occupation for helpless widows and other unfortunate people. If the British administrators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had real understanding and sympathy for the masses of this country, they would not have allowed this balance of rural economy to be dangerously upset.

Hand-loom weaving was in a different position. Generally, it was a full time family occupation. It offered a stiffer resistance to the invasion of mill-cloth as the only alternative to the weaver families was to become landless agricultural labourers at the bottom of the economic scale. Yet the handlooms have lost greatly to the power loom. It is estimated that in 1935-36, the handlooms produced 464 million lbs. of cloth against 761 million lbs. produced by the textile mills in India. Taking into account the imported cloth, it may be said that the handlooms produce one-third of the cloth consumed in India and have lost two-thirds of the market to the mill cloth. Conservative Indian habits, especially in saris, have been

largely responsible for this partial preservation of the handloom. The surviving handloom weavers are in a rather precarious position. It has been recognised in recent times that without active state help and protection, they must face slow but sure extinction. The Government of India has thrown a few lakhs at them and the Provincial Governments have tried to save their consciences by talking a great deal about cooperation and spending the grants on instructors and organisers. Before going into the policy which a socialist state may adopt towards the charkha and the handloom, it is desirable to deal with the question of cottage industries in general.

According to the census of 1931, there are about 175 lakhs of workers engaged in industry. As has been already pointed out, only a small fraction of about 10 per cent of these are engaged in power industry. The rest are in cottage industries. They are distributed as follows: Textiles 45 lakhs, wood 20 lakhs, food industries 17 lakhs, ceramics 12 lakhs, metals 8 lakhs, building industries 7 lakhs, toilet and dress 39 lakhs, chemical products 7 lakhs and other miscellaneous industries 20 lakhs. Many of these workers are highly skilled, though they may not be able to compete with mass production by power machinery. The fate of such a large number of workers cannot be neglected in any scheme of planned economy.

What are the principles which should govern socialistic reconstruction in India in relation to these industries? The problem is threefold. The same considerations cannot apply (1) to the cottage industries which are still the mainstay of lakhs of families (2) to those which were alive in the past but have become more or less extinguished and (3) others which might be newly introduced. Obviously, the claims of the existing cottage industries come first.

The central principle of socialist reconstruction should be the well-being of the people. They cannot be sacrificed at the altar of any theory. To the extent the machines can relieve them of difficult drudgery, they ought to be welcome. But they cannot be allowed to dislocate and destroy the lives of lakhs of families. Similarly, no doctrine of Arcadian simplicity should make one blind to the actual facts of ugliness and poverty in our villages. The golden mean will have to be sought. This will involve the preservation of the artisans and cottage industries while an attempt will be made to train them scientifically and supply them with modern tools. The scheme of village planning outlined in the last chapter will increase the work of carpenters, masons, potters and other village artisans considerably. It should give a fine opportunity to increase the efficiency of the existing workers while training the new generation in more up-to-date methods.

Applying this principle to the handloom, the existing handloom weavers will have to be protected by prohibiting the mills from manufacturing the types which can be produced in the handloom at reasonable cost. The increasing consumption of cloth, which will be one of the first fruits of socialist reconstruction, will be carefully rationed out between the handloom and the powerloom. The former will be improved and probably a stage will soon arrive when by the application of electricity the handloom worker will become a modernised industrial worker though working in his own home. His output may have to be regulated. It is just possible that as cloth is an universal necessity, every village panchayat will have a few handlooms to supply plain working clothes for its residents while leaving the supply of special varieties to more organised centres. Variety of occupations will enrich the village life. Weaving, carpentry, bricklaying and pottery are not only ancient handicrafts, they are also among the most fascinating and educative human occupations and socialist India should earnestly strive to keep their character as cottage industries while improving the tools and methods with the aid of modern science and invention.

In the case of metal workers, there is another powerful reason for severely restricting mass production. As will be explained in a latter chapter, India is deficient in metals and the separation of

Burma has intensified this deficiency. Except some copper, the other metals needed in household use, silver, lead, zinc, tin, etc., have to come from abroad. Their use for domestic purposes has to be discouraged rather than encouraged. The preservation of cottage industries in metals and the prevention of competition by power production will keep the consumption of these metals at a low level.

Should the dead cottage industries be revived? In recent years, attempt has been made to revive besides hand spinning, hand pounding of rice and other cereals, the village oil crushing mill, paper-making, and other rural industries. It would be wrong to decide the matter by abstract generalisations. For instance, the hand pounding of rice is a drudgery, but nutrition experts say that hand-pounded rice is superior to milled rice in nutritional properties. Whether milling can be so organised as to preserve the nutritional properties is a matter for scientific investigation. If it can, it would be certainly more convenient to supply the towns with milled rice and not call upon the rural folk to drudge for the town dweller. Even then, there should be no difficulty for the villager to pound his own rice. The indiscriminate setting up of rice mills is one of the most telling demonstrations of the evils of uncontrolled private capitalism in India.

Handspinning is in a special category of its own. There can be no comparison at all between

the cost of mill-spinning and hand spinning. The output has no peculiar virtue. Though the work is easy and light, it is laborious and monotonous and, lastly, the revival of hand spinning on any large scale requires direct production and distribution by the state. On the other hand, it has to be recognised that dry areas which produce poor quality cotton are particularly liable to famine, that it is difficult to organise any other industry for them and that the ultimate fate of the handloom is bound up with the revival of the charkha. In this connection the temporary and permanent aspects of hand spinning have to be recognised. In cotton areas where the spinners can have their own cotton spinning for home consumption can be of very great help during the transition period. It would enable the poorest sections of the people to concentrate on better food and housing by avoiding the need for cash for clothing. But, the possibility of spinning becoming a permanent factor in Indian economics depends on technical developments. If spinning can be decentralised like weaving, while admitting the use of electricity on a small scale, it would be an ideal solution. It is absurd and impossible to apply the doctrine of self sufficiency to each village. But, it would certainly be wise and consistent with socialist reconstruction to make the provinces and even districts self-sufficient in the matter of food, clothing and housing. The general participation of the



people as a whole in the production of these primary necessities will provide a fundamental distribution of work and wealth which will make Indian socialism proof against sudden political upheavals. The concentration of textile mills in certain areas is bound to be a source of mischief and friction between the producing and consuming provinces. As in the case of weaving, the solution may be found by a judicious adjustment of large scale and small scale production.

Regarding the other cottage industries which are sought to be revived or newly introduced, the idea of mere revivalism is sure to result in unnecessary waste of energy. They should begin on a new plane. The aim should not be to add to the labour of those who are already working but to convert the present leisured classes into skilled workers using modern tools as far as possible. Thus watch-making, toy manufacture, lacquer-work, furniture and carpet industries, leather work and many others can be organised on a small scale but on a modern basis. In fact they offer the only chance to the taluq towns to emerge from their present more or less parasitical existence to an era of productive prosperity.

The abstract and *a priori* method of discussion is particularly harmful in the case of cottage industries. When a new house has to be built on the same site as the old house, it has to be a matter of nice calculation which parts of the old structure

have to be preserved and when and in what manner the other parts have to be pulled down. New temporary sheds may also be necessary. Those who argue that everything old must be immediately destroyed in order to erect a new structure may find that they have to suffer and die in the cold before they can translate their vision into a reality. On the other hand, overwhelming veneration for the past is a burden on the present generation and a stumbling block in the path of future generations. No step may be taken which forces large sections of the Indian population to give up precipitately their traditional habits of life. They will die like flies in the process as their vitality is pitifully low. Nor can any conclusion be accepted which would leave them for ever in a state of semi-starvation and beggary. To the extent modern science can enrich and heal, it should be freely and thankfully accepted. It will be the privilege of a peaceful approach to socialism that it will never be forced to accept the destructive power of modern science and industry as an inevitable *quid pro quo* for the wonderful new constructive power it can bestow upon us.

**PART 3**  
**THE INDUSTRIAL FRONT**  
**CHAPTER XI.**

**THE LIMITING CONDITIONS OF INDUSTRIAL PLANNING.**

Any plan of socialist reconstruction will have many features in common with Soviet Russian Planning. These common features will be much more numerous on the industrial side than on the agrarian or social fronts. Modern industry requires the same kind of effort everywhere and one country can easily copy another in this field. It would therefore be right and proper that those who might be put in charge of actually carrying out the socialist plan will be required to study the Russian methods and programmes carefully. It would not be a bad thing to request the loan of some officers connected with planning commissions from Soviet Russia in the initial stages. But industrial planning in India will have many differences from Russia due to the different objective conditions under which such planning will take place and to the differences in the natural resources available.

Russia started with a clean slate but with a broken and bloody pencil. She could and did write in big purple patches. The properties and plants of the capitalist classes were expropriated at one

stroke. The disinherited bourgeois technicians and engineers could not be trusted. Hence Soviet Russia plunged boldly for the creation of a heavy industry which will enable her to be independent of a hostile capitalist world for her industrial apparatus. She had to pay heavily for it and without proper technical personnel, immense loss was suffered through inefficiency. But military dictatorship suppressed all complaints, intense revolutionary fervour kept up hope, propaganda continually pictured the vision of the future which the sacrifices were creating. The immense resources which lay dormant in the vast area covered by Soviet Russia gave scope for gigantic planning.

Not one of these conditions will obtain in India if she advances towards socialism in a peaceful manner. She would have one great advantage. Her middle class engineers and technicians will be available for the new plan. But the old capitalist interests will have to be liquidated. New capital will have to be secured from the masses who can save but little. She will have to work politically under a democracy and will have to limit the plans to the extent the people are prepared to go. Therefore a slower tempo is inevitable. This need not be regretted as it will ensure that there will be no waste due to haste or inefficiency.

The first step which has to be taken is to prohibit any further acquisition of power machines

by private individuals or corporations. New industrial plant will be owned only by public agencies which will be described in the next chapter. So far as the existing concerns are concerned, they would be taken over by the appropriate agencies on payment of compensation which will consist of dividends for a period of years. This would be similar to the terms of nationalisation of agricultural land but two changes may be necessary. It would not do to declare that on a particular date all industrial plants will become national property as they may be spoilt in the interval by neglect. The compensation should take the form of payment of dividend for a definite period from the date the plant is taken over. The dividend should be the average of the dividends paid by the concern during the five years preceding the nationalisation. As industrial shares are more liquid than land and as they are seldom the sole means of subsistence, the period of compensation may be limited to twenty years. Under these conditions, the private owners will have every interest in keeping their plant up to date and in good working order. All the workers will continue even after nationalisation but the superior staff may have to face salary reductions to bring them in line with other national services.

India need not concentrate on heavy industry to the same extent as Soviet Russia for two reasons. Her defence requirements will not be materially

increased. The fact that she is attempting a new order by peaceful means will gain for her the active goodwill of many nations including the U. S. A., Britain and the U. S. S. R. and her geographical isolation and the absence of powerful neighbours on her frontiers would make it easy to defend herself with even less expenditure than at present. She need not also be afraid of a boycott by the industrial countries for her machinery and machine parts. Ultimately she would have to depend on herself for them but she can take it easy in the transition stage and need not put her new economy to an undue strain.

She will also go deliberately slow in many of the light industries, so that her rural economy might not be upset. The generous climate of India makes it unnecessary to produce warm clothing, socks and boots for large sections of the people. The growth of cotton textile mills will have to be co-ordinated with the handlooms and the development of hand-spinning, if the latter were found possible. Hasty development of canned foods may interfere with the market for fresh fruits and vegetables. The development of light industry will be regulated by the principle of production for local consumption, the area of the local market varying according to the nature of the commodity and the availability of raw materials.

In the opening stages, the main effort will be directed towards three sets of industries (1) those

necessary to increase agricultural production like chemical manures and improved tools, (2) those which will replace imports of manufactured goods and will release foreign exchange for the purchase of machinery, (3) transport. Before considering these, a few remarks must be made regarding fuel which is indispensable for every branch of industrialisation.

India is rather poor in fuel resources. There is a fair amount of coal in Bihar and Bengal and a little in C.P. and Hyderabad, but it will have to be carefully conserved and rationed if it is not to be exhausted too soon. Petroleum is to be found only in Assam and the Punjab, the production in the latter being only 3 million gallons a year. Hydro-electric power is available in Bombay, Madras, Mysore, N.W.F.P. and in other places. The Indian forests supply a good amount of wood. Still, these resources are very poor compared to the United States or Soviet Russia and India will have to be very economical in their use. In private capitalist industrialisation, the wastage of fuel will be greater than under socialism. Still, even socialist economy will have to be careful in the use of fuel. Burma is rich in petroleum products and will of course meet our needs to a large extent. But, industrialisation based on imported fuel will not be on a secure basis and has to be restricted to the minimum extent. Water power is the most unfailing source and the big irrigation systems of India should be utilised for

hydro electric power stations large and small, perpetual and seasonal.

The Indian peasant uses but little of chemical manures to day Under socialist economy, proper manuring will be insisted on in the small as well as the great farms and there will be scope for an *enormous consumption of artificial fertilisers*. Under the second five year plan in Russia, the supply of nitrogen fertilizers will be 14 million tons, of phosphate fertilisers 3 million tons, and of potash fertilisers 1.7 million tons for a sown area of nearly the same acreage as India The manufacture of these fertilisers and allied chemicals will form the starting point for socialist industrialisation in India As the market is evenly spread out all over the country, the plants should be as small as can be for an economic unit and distributed at convenient centres

Almost all the articles of food and clothing which are now imported may be stopped and replaced by local produce or manufacture without further industrialisation The types of imported goods which require new plants are (1) textile machinery, (2) locomotives, (3) motor vehicles, (4) electrical goods (5) dyestuffs, drugs and other chemicals Socialist planning will immediately set about organising their manufacture in India This will release foreign exchange for the machinery required for the new schemes without any need for increasing our agricultural exports



India is not backward in railway transport which is already a national concern. But, it is only one among the four methods of modern transport, *viz*, air, water, rail and motor. All these forms should be unified and used with maximum efficiency and economy. The agencies through which these forms of transport can be run will be dealt with in a later chapter. It is enough to say here that India is still a virgin field for transport industries. There is not a single locomotive factory, nor a single ship building yard nor an aeroplane factory in India. Socialist India cannot put up with this dependence on foreign countries for her transport systems. The transport industries are equally essential for defence purposes and they will naturally form an important group of industries to be taken up immediately.

Any detailed study of industrial planning in relation to quantity, location etc is beyond the scope of this work. In this chapter, the approach to the problem of industrial planning has been indicated. It would be one of calm determination without any confusion or hurry. The existing industries which are considerable will not be dislocated but nationalised with the minimum of friction and with the general consent of the present owners. While our exports will be maintained, the imports will change first from manufactured goods to machinery and then from machinery to machines which make the machinery.

It is in the national interest to ensure that industries should as far as possible be distributed all over the country. It will be through the nationalised profits of power industries that the social services are continuously expanded and the standard of life of the agricultural masses raised. Hence, socialist industrial planning will lay down the minimum and maximum number of industrial workers for each political unit. In India, it is inconceivable that any proportion comparable to the industrial nations of Europe or to the U S A will be reached. Between 1940-50, there would be 10 million more workers than during 1920-30 as a result of the increase of population during the latter period. If this additional crore of workers can be put on power industry, it would be as big a work as we can contemplate. It would mean the increase of our industrial production to three to four times its present size, in a period of ten years. So far as agriculture is concerned, it would give a much needed period for consolidation and improvement without the complication of finding work and food for surplus workers. In other words, the rural population would be stationary while the urban population will increase by a crore of families. The market for agricultural produce will naturally expand and with it the purchasing power of the rural population. The vicious circle which limits industrialisation by the poverty of the masses and makes this

very limitation the cause of further impoverishment of the masses will be broken.

It should be borne in mind that it is only through socialist industrialisation that the purchasing power of the masses can be substantially raised. In capitalist industrialisation a large part of it is appropriated by small classes who save it or spend it on luxuries. It is only those small countries which live on export that can hope for a general rise of standard of life through capitalist industrialisation. The strength as well as the weakness of Indian economy is that it will have to be always self-sufficient to a very large extent. The insignificant growth in the number of industrial workers in the last twenty years shows that socialism is a pre-requisite condition for industrialisation of this country on any considerable scale.

## CHAPTER XII

### OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF INDUSTRIES.

Simply because industrial undertakings would be public property, it should not be imagined that ownership and management would not present difficult and complicated problems. In socialist India, there would be a multiplicity of public bodies who would be running the industries and there would be much need for co-ordination and mutual adjustment between them. The existence of many agencies is necessary and desirable, for, there would then be a certain amount of healthy competition and it would make it necessary to evolve objective standards defining when an industry is productive and when it is not. An unitary socialist State with complete state socialism will be totalitarian both in politics and economics and it would be as impossible to lay down and enforce economic standards as to formulate and maintain standards of freedom and democratic political responsibility. It is, therefore, fortunate that the first socialist state in the world should be a Federation large enough to necessitate a multiplicity of agencies to carry on its economic life. If India manages to reach socialism

through peaceful methods, her industrial organisation would be freer and more decentralised than in Soviet Russia.

The main owners of industrial Capital will be the Federal and Provincial Governments, the Municipalities and regional and special organisations set up by these and the village soviets in any region. It is unprofitable to lay down any precise plan; for, the essence of socialist reconstruction would be to experiment with many forms of management and let the final forms emerge out of actual experience. It may, however, be useful to indicate in the broadest outline some of the solutions which are likely to be adopted.

Certain industries have necessarily to be owned and managed by the Federal Government. Thus munition industries, exchange, currency and coinage, posts, telegraphs and telephones, will have to be purely Central government concerns. Probably the simplest method of management will be to set up autonomous boards with definite capital which will be responsible to the central government and endeavour to be self-supporting under a schedule of prices and wages fixed by the Central Government. There would be a general Board of Industries which will supervise the work of these particular Boards and enforce the policies laid down by the Federal Government.

There would be a big class of industries which would have to be owned and worked jointly by the

Central and Provincial governments All forms of transport will have to come under this category. There would have to be a Central Transport Board consisting of representatives of all the governments concerned which will own all the major ports, shipping, railways, and aeroplanes Motor transport may be allowed to be a provincial monopoly but subject to the control of the Central Transport Board in all matters concerning the division of traffic between motor traffic and the other forms of transport River and canal traffic can be dealt with on the same lines

Minerals would form Provincial monopolies but their conservation and exploitation is a matter of All-India importance and prices and freights will have to be fixed with the consent of the Central Government which will also be the proper agency for research and education in connection with the development of the mineral resources of the country.

Within the province, the bigger industries will be state undertakings managed by autonomous boards Electricity, mining and metallurgy, textiles and chemicals will fall under this category. Normally the province will be a protected market for the local manufactures and agreements will be necessary between rival provinces producing the same article for the sharing of the market in the other provinces There will have to be a central advisory board for dealing with such marketing problems

It would not be advantageous to make all industries provincial state undertakings. There would have to be regional organisations for the purpose. They may be constituted in two ways. Co-operative undertakings of workers running their own factory may be allowed. Another type of co-operative enterprise in which the primary shareholders will be the village soviets and the municipal councils may be formed to conduct local enterprises. In both cases, there will be audit and supervision by the Provincial Government.

There would also be some industries which the municipal councils and the village panchayats will be able to run by themselves. The food and entertainment industries will fall into this category. They would run the cinemas and hotels and theatres, making of biscuits and jams, fruit preservation, etc.

While most of the power industries will be owned by public agencies of one or other forms indicated above, there would still be some scope for private initiative. Co-operative enterprise should be welcomed and encouraged. Artisans would be encouraged with modern implements. Even private corporations would be permitted in industries where public effort will not have the necessary freedom and elasticity. Thus publication of books, production of films, and manufacture of musical instruments may be left to private enterprise. Public enterprise would

not be excluded from this field but private corporations may be necessary to stimulate healthy variety

Banking and Insurance will require complicated treatment. Generally they also have to conform to the types outlined for the industries. Central and exchange banks will belong to the central government while the provincial banks will be run by the provincial government. Co-operative industries will be financed by co-operative banks. Big towns may be allowed to run their own banks while the needs of the village industries will be met by branches of the provincial state banks. The scope for insurance will be considerably extended. Social insurance will be treated in another chapter. So far as industrial insurance is concerned, marine insurance will have to be undertaken by the central government while fire, motor and other insurance will be provincial. Agricultural insurance will develop greatly in socialist India. The village Soviet will insure every cultivator against floods and droughts by collecting a small premium for the purpose and the panchayats will be grouped in convenient regions according to crops and irrigation sources for forming insurance units for this purpose.

The association of workers in the management of industries will be an essential feature of socialist industry. But, except in co-operative undertakings



the responsibility cannot be shared and the workers will have to be content with an advisory role. The trade unions will have a right to criticise the management and there would be some machinery to investigate these complaints. As there would be no private owners, the managing staff will also consist of workers and there would not be the present antagonism between labour and management. But as Soviet Russia has found, discipline is even more necessary in a socialist regime than in capitalist industry. In the latter, discipline is maintained by punishments and rewards. They cannot have the same place in socialised industries though even there efficiency will mean promotion. Voluntary discipline based on an intimate knowledge of the working of their concern and the certainty that their views will be given the most careful consideration will certainly raise the efficiency of the worker. Hence it will be part of the routine of every socialist concern to educate the worker to understand the work he has to do and to convince him that he is working not for the profit of any class but for the benefit of the whole community. Naturally the wages will be fixed in consultation with the unions and also the allocation of profits between the workers and the state.

It will thus be seen that socialism does not mean any single owner or type of management. There will be a multiplicity of agencies. But all of them would be producing for use and not for profit and

this will be the fundamental difference between the present capitalist system and a socialist society. There would have to be strict accounting and careful adjustment of costs and prices. But the purpose of such accounting will be radically different. It would not measure the utility of any industry by the return it makes on the capital invested but by its capacity to utilise natural resources in the neighbourhood to produce articles of general use. Even capitalist states have found in the field of shipping and other industries that it is shortsighted to insist on profit from every unit of an industry. To the extent an accounting loss represents waste or inefficiency, it is a matter to be dealt with promptly. But so far as it represents merely adverse natural factors relative to a more fortunately placed unit of this same industry, the value of the industry has to be decided by considerations other than immediate profit or loss. This principle is recognised in India with reference to irrigation works. In every province there are works which are classed unproductive in the sense that the charges that can be reasonably collected from the ryots do not yield a particular return from the capital invested. But if the works are abandoned it would result in the starvation of millions by increasing pressure on the neighbouring areas. The same is true of industries also. If an industry can pay the minimum wages and provide for the depreciation of its plant, it is productive in the real and fundamental sense. The

profit is the tribute paid by the workers and consumers for the supposed virtue of having saved the original capital. Even a socialist state may run its enterprises at a profit, but this will be returned in the form of social services. When an industry cannot yield any profit, it would not be condemned or scrapped unless the workers can be absorbed in a better fashion in a new industry. Work for the citizen and the social utility of the product will be the ultimate tests applicable in a socialist system. On the other hand, no amount of profit should induce socialist India to promote harmful industries like intoxicating liquors. While capitalism has promoted production and invention, it has done so without any regard to the utilities of things. It has promoted an ever increasing diversion of capital and labour to sterile and harmful industries like cosmetics and quack medicines patented under fanciful names and marketed through unscrupulous advertisement. If Great Britain's expenditure on alcoholic drinks, tobacco, cosmetics and similar non utilities is deducted from her national income, the standard of life of the British people will be found to be not so enviable after all. The perversion of work and wealth is as great a blot on capitalism as its tendency to favour the selfish and the unscrupulous sections of the people. This evil, while pernicious in any country, is a calamity in India where crores have to go without the minimum of food, clothing and housing. In India, industry will be even more parasitic than in other capitalist countries unless it is socialised.

## CHAPTER XIII

### FINANCE AND TAXATION

Modern capitalism is dominated more by financiers than genuine industrialists. The industrial engineers, chemists and scientists are relegated more and more to the background and speculators and swindlers play with production and distribution on a large scale in order to have their commissions. In India, the industrial entrepreneur never came into existence. This country marched straight from Medievalism into finance capitalism. Hence Indian industry has always been dominated by financiers without any knowledge of the industrial processes and without any vital interest in the promotion of science and research. It has been purely imitative and has contributed no element of originality. In Japan, an intense nationalist spirit, governmental control, and the need to compete against other nations combined to produce a degree of efficiency which has been a wonder to the world. The Indian capitalists have nothing similar to show on their account. The managing agency system, which may be said to be specially Indian, is merely a corruption and an useless burden on industry. It is no wonder that private coal mine owners protest against the working of railway collieries. In spite of the wasteful management of the Indian Railways, the higher

staff of which is more or less an extension of the Indian Civil Service, state-worked collieries have often produced cheaper coal.

Socialism means the extinction of all kinds of financial speculation. Instead of finding capital through devious ways and paying commission at every stage before this capital is converted into industrial plant, socialist India will allot a part of her annual income for capital expenditure. Private individuals will be allowed to save but this saving will not be considered such a virtue as to justify a high reward. In capitalist society, saving is a virtue second only to swindling. If a person can save a lakh of rupees, his family becomes entitled to a permanent pension of 3, 4 or 5 hundred rupees per month. This absurdity will cease. But savings will be safeguarded and no one will be allowed to walk away with them as often happens to be the case now. No interest will be paid or there will only be nominal interest.

If industrialisation is attempted at a moderate tempo, there would be no difficulty in finding the capital for it. As in the case of the present capitalist system, it will consist partly of savings and partly of credit. But the savings will consist of a greater proportion of public savings and the savings of individuals will play a very minor part. The credit will also be much cheaper as it need be no more than is required for long term bank management and a charge to cover losses.

Accounting will be more scientific and complete under a socialist system than under a capitalist system. In the latter facts are hidden and manipulated in innumerable ways and the standard of value is liable to fluctuate widely. The disappearance of the gold standard, and the perilous state of the currency system in every country is, perhaps, the most convincing proof of the bankruptcy of capitalism. It is now clear that the price of gold or its possession has no vital connection with the economic activities of the people and it cannot serve as a standard of value. A proper standard has to be based on a stable level of prices and a steady level of wages. Neither can be secured without complete control of production, distribution and prices. A managed currency with an unplanned and uncontrolled economic system is a contradiction which cannot last. After the last war, currency inflation made havoc of the distribution of wealth and income in most European countries and the same result may be expected after the present war, unless the control now established over production and distribution is continued. Though in many aspects Fascism and Nazism are reactionary, they have recognised the need for strict control and management of national currencies and in spite of frequent predictions of disaster, both Germany and Italy have been getting on without any gold. Soviet Russia has been only too anxious to part with her gold to those who still cling with superstitious faith in the yellow metal.

Free India will not tolerate the present link with the sterling for a moment. This means that the prices of Indian agricultural produce will be determined by the needs of British industry and that the export trade which is insignificant compared with the vast internal trade will dominate the field. The principles on which socialist India will manage her currency system are fairly simple. The basic wages and prices of her principal products will be fixed and the quantity of money will be such as to secure them within a small range of variations. As the producing and selling authorities will be public bodies, they will not be able to undersell one another and disturb the basis of the currency system. The prices and wages will be periodically revalued at intervals in relation to technical and other changes. The present Reserve Bank will not be able to do this work satisfactorily. It will have to be liquidated and in its place a directorate consisting of representatives of the Central and Provincial governments will have to be instituted. The bank's main work will have to be to maintain the internal price level and fix foreign exchanges accordingly. The latter would be an easy task as international trade will not be in private hands and will be subject to central control.

The present taxation system in India is regressive and inelastic. In the provinces, excise and land revenue in the present form will have to be given up. At the centre, the salt tax will have to

disappear and the customs revenue will dwindle. Thus even under capitalist nationalism, the system will have to be radically altered. But the 2½ years of Congress ministries in many provinces have shown that it is difficult to replace the existing sources in the orthodox fashion. Socialist taxation system will be based on the general principle that the main revenues of each part will have to be derived from its business undertakings. It should be possible for the central government to finance itself by its transport, posts and telegraphs, central banking, and other industries. The present passenger income of the Indian Railways is one rupee per head and postal income 4 as per head. Ten years of socialist reconstruction will double and treble these receipts. Nationalised shipping will be able to give substantial income and inter provincial and exchange banking which will be a central monopoly can yield considerable amounts. The central government will have its share in many industries and will get a share of their profit.

The Provincial Governments will surrender their land revenue to the village panchayats who will bear the cost of village services. All the bigger industrial enterprises will be provincial and the share which now goes to the financiers will go to the upkeep of the provincial government. Irrigation, registration, and agricultural and veterinary services to the villages will be charged on a reasonable basis. The village panchayats will finance themselves out



of the land revenue and the municipalities from their municipal undertakings including housing. The whole arrangement will be flexible and the prosperity of governmental finances will be proportional to the business efficiency of its parts.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MARKETING AND TRADE

It is admitted by everybody that marketing in India is in a very primitive and unsatisfactory condition and that as a consequence, the consumer has to pay without any guarantee as to quality or even weight or measure. It is obvious that with millions of small scale producers and lakhs of petty traders, this state of affairs cannot be altered to any great extent. Both the producer and the consumer have to suffer on this account. During recent years the Government of India has appointed a central marketing officer and provincial marketing officers to deal with this problem but unless it is handled in a more thorough going fashion, these officers cannot do much.

Rational marketing requires scientific grading, uniformity of weights and measures and proper warehousing. So far as the staple crops are concerned every village should have its own godown in which the harvested crop could be stored after grading. Accurate weighing machines could be installed in these godowns and the goods should be sold co-operatively. For special commodities like vegetables and dairy produce, larger regional co-operatives may be required. The transport

agencies could also help marketing by building central warehouses near the railway stations and the motor routes and providing special conveniences for the preservation and transport of perishable goods.

*It has been the experience of Soviet Russia as well as the capitalist countries that co operation is specially successful in trade and particularly in retail trade. In the smaller villages, it should be possible for a single co-operative store to supply all the things needed. But in the bigger villages and towns, a multiplicity of such stores may be necessary. They may be parallel and competitive as well as complimentary by dealing in particular kinds of goods.*

There will be no need for socialist India to prohibit private trading. The development of co-operative and other forms of public trading combined with the progressive nationalisation of production will automatically and continuously restrict the scope for private trade and this branch of capitalism will wither away without any special effort or compensation. Private trading, especially by hawkers and pedlars and dealers in curios and antiques, may continue even under socialism but the bulk of commerce will be conducted by co-operative and state agencies.

Under a socialist system, the foreign trade of India will be a state monopoly but delicate

adjustments will be required to balance the interests of the central and provincial governments. Composite boards of trade consisting of the representatives of both will have to be set up in all the provinces under the supervision of a Central Board of Trade similarly composed. The Indian Stores Department of the Government of India has shown that government agencies can make bargains as efficiently as private merchants and often more economically as it buys larger quantities at a time. It has been pointed out that with industrialisation, Indian imports will consist largely of machinery for factories owned by public agencies. Exports will continue to be jute, tea, oilseeds, cotton, etc. For each of these commodities an organisation like the one for licensing the sale of tea may have to be set up which will issue licenses specifying quantities and periods so that the various provinces may dispose of their export surplus in an organised manner. With bilateral agreements and international barter, even capitalist governments have to regulate and assist the foreign trade of their country and under a managed currency system they have also to collect the dues and pay the foreign claims. Nationalisation of foreign trade will therefore simplify matters and will present no special difficulties.

The regulation of inter provincial trade will be much more complicated. The annual crop is subject to violent fluctuations due to seasonal

conditions. It would be a matter of cardinal importance to secure normal supplies of food-stuffs and basic raw materials. For this purpose, it is necessary that stocks should be built up in prosperous years. At least one year's supply of rice, wheat, cotton and other commodities should be stocked in special storehouses belonging to the provincial governments and should be used to regulate the prices and meet the needs of famine areas.

The Indian tariff will be regulated mainly with a view to maintain the internal price level and its revenue aspect will take a secondary place. Even in Socialist India, a province may buy from outside things which are available from other provinces and this freedom will be necessary to avoid provincial quarrels. But local produce would be secured a fair price and the tariff will have to be adjusted to give it a small price preference over imported goods. The adjustment of freight charges may be used in the same way to give a small price preference to local producers within a province.

Under the capitalist system, there can be tremendous differences between the cost of production and the cost to the consumer. Prices of many articles are doubled and trebled before they reach the consumer. The tendency to adulteration and deterioration of quality is also irresistible. A socialist system will avoid these evils. But it will

have difficulties of its own. Though the consumer is fleeced under capitalism, his tastes are attended to by competing producers and their selling agents. Socialist production and distribution may tend to standardise things too much and in order to avoid this, special steps may have to be taken to make the producing and selling organisations attentive to the wishes of the consumer. At the same time, it should be remembered that the poor man under capitalism has precious little chance to buy anything and the craze after fashion and variety is a hobby of the idle propertied classes.

**PART 4**  
**THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FRONT**  
**CHAPTER XV.**

**EDUCATION**

The building-up of adequate and efficient social services is both the foundation and the objective of every scheme of radical political and economic reconstruction. It is needless to say that a proper system of education is indispensable. There has been endless discussion in India in recent years about education. Dissatisfaction has been nearly universal at the failure and inadequacy of the system built up by the British Government. Some new ideas have emerged. It is felt that the child in India should be educated not to despise the village life and manual labour but to play a vital part in the village of the future and do more efficient labour. There is even greater consensus of opinion that the system of education imparted in secondary schools and universities which fits students mostly for clerical duties should be scrapped and made to fit in with the new objectives of a self-reliant and creative India.

While these discussions have been of the greatest interest and value, they have been to some

extent unreal as they have neglected to take into account objective realities. It is always tempting to forget the immense population of India and the astronomical figures involved in bringing any benefit to the entire people. Reformers and administrators start with the idea of improving the lot of the whole but rapidly reconcile themselves with slight benefits to small groups. No discussion of education can be real unless it visualises all the time the vast numbers involved and unless it is calculated to bring them all within its scope in a specified time. The following figures should be considered crucial in any real attempt to find a solution of the question.

Between 1921 and 1931, the population of India increased by 339 lakhs while the number of literates increased from 226 to 281 lakhs. In other words, the total number of illiterates increased in this decade by no less than 284 lakhs. It is not surprising that our administrators try to hide this unpleasant fact by saying that there was a slight increase in the percentage of literacy. It is no consolation to know that literacy increased from 7 to 8 per cent when the actual fact is that India was in a worse position to catch up with the flood of illiteracy in 1931 than it was in 1921. There is no doubt that the coming census will tell an even more dismal tale. The great depression of this decade slowed down even the meagre progress attempted under the Dyarchy.



It is obvious that it is wholly beside the point to talk wisely about schemes of education when the national ability to enforce it all over the country is diminishing. Two vital decisions should precede every other in the field of education. Within a specified time, say 3 years, every child between 5 and 12 should be made to attend school. It matters little, to start with, what sort of school it is or whether the teacher has been trained properly. The great thing should be that every child is at school and that every improvement in education will automatically accrue to the entire population. The second decision should be that in a similar period every adult below 40 or 45 years of age should be made literate. For the achievement of both these objects there should be intellectual conscription all over the country for the necessary period. All educated youths belonging to the rent or interest receiving classes should be recruited and made to run the schools free or on a small remuneration if their income is too small for their families. Every village should be informed that if these two objectives are not attained within the prescribed time, it will be liable for a collective punitive fine which will be used by the higher authorities for the same purpose. For a beginning let there be complete freedom in the choice of teachers so long as they have been educated up to a minimum standard. Let there also be no stipulation regarding school buildings, furniture, books or equipment. Any pial or shady place ought

to suffice and let the teacher use any books he can lay his hands upon.

When once all the children of school-going age have been put to school and adult illiteracy abolished, it would be possible to evolve plans to place the entire system of elementary education on a rational and effective foundation. The building or extension of the school so as to have provision for a small workshop, flower and vegetable gardening and play-grounds should form a vital part in village-planning. Instead of the one crore of children in the primary schools, there will be 6 crores as soon as compulsory primary education is enforced, and allowing 30 children for a teacher, 20 lakhs of teachers will be required. It is a curious coincidence that the total number of students in the secondary schools are about 23 lakhs or nearly the number of teachers required. Hence teaching should be a compulsory subject in the high schools so that every S.S.L.C. will be a trained teacher without the expense of special training schools. The inspection of primary schools may also be left to the teachers in secondary schools each of whom will become the guardian of 10 or 12 primary schools. It is also necessary to introduce compulsory training in handicrafts in the secondary schools if the primary schools are to be reorganised on the basis of craft education. Socialist India will ultimately insist on every child being at school till it is 14 years old. But to begin with, the 5 year primary

school for 6 crores of children is as big a job as can be attempted.

It is obvious that one of the main purposes of secondary education is to provide teachers for the primary schools. It has already been pointed out that all the present 'secondary schools will be necessary for the purpose. But agriculture, industry and other social services will require trained workers and the task in this field is to build up new vocational institutions for them. The students will be recruited from the primary schools and to start with these schools will have to impart general education also and the course may have to be for five or six years. But, as primary education advances and general education up to 14 becomes universal, the vocational schools will restrict the general education provided by them and reduce their courses to 3 or 4 years. These secondary or polytechnic schools will provide all the normal workers in agriculture, industry, medicine, engineering, administration, etc.

It is possible to estimate very roughly the number of technical workers who may be required. Each village will require one doctor and one agricultural expert. Though it may not need a full-timed civil, mechanical or electrical engineer, it is not an exaggerated estimate that on an average one of these engineers can look after three villages and that the total number of engineers will be the same as the doctors. Industries, administration and other services.

may require about 10 lakhs of technical workers and hence, the total number of technical workers which the vocational schools will have to turn out will be in the neighbourhood of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lakhs a year. Including the output of all professional colleges, the present supply is less than 10 per cent of this number.

There are one lakh of students in the Indian Universities undergoing arts and science courses. But it is only a fraction of these who may be said to be undergoing real university training. The intermediate classes belong to the field of secondary education and many of the arts and science courses are useless and unnecessary. The university education should mean high technical knowledge and capacity for research and the minimum should be the Honours or M.A. The present number is not excessive but it may be advisable to start with a smaller number by transferring the intermediate classes to the high schools and abolishing the pass courses. Post-graduate and research work will take the dominant field in university education.

The village panchayats and municipalities will naturally be in charge of primary education. The secondary and vocational schools should be scientifically distributed all over the Province and the provincial government should run them. In the case of universities, it would be desirable to organise them on an All-India basis and for this purpose a central organisation consisting of representatives of

the central and provincial governments should be set up. Facilities for research should be the main consideration for the location of the universities and unnecessary duplication should be avoided as far as possible.

It is of the essence of socialist reconstruction that education should be free in all stages and where the student has to live away from his home, his boarding and lodging also should be free. It is only through free education that real equality of opportunity can be secured for all. There would generally be freedom of choice at the secondary stage but admission to the universities will have to be strictly restricted to those who show fitness for advanced education.

It is only through the acceptance of the general principle of co education in all stages that girls can get equal opportunities with boys. Where the numbers can justify them, there should be no objection to separate institutions, especially at the secondary stage. Co education involves that teachers also should be mixed. The ideal arrangement for primary education is to have four teacher schools in which two will be women teachers. In mixed secondary schools there should be a fair proportion of women teachers. The problem of sex relations is delicate and difficult and there will always be much difference of opinion as to how far freedom of social intercourse can be permitted.

without degenerating into license and promiscuity. But, anything like the segregation which has obtained in the past in Hindu and Muslim India is an utter impossibility. India has paid dearly for the imprisonment of Woman by political slavery, racial emasculation and crude superstition. A healthy feeling of mutual respect can be secured only through the educational institutions and women teachers in primary schools should be able to lay the foundations of the new relations between Man and Woman in Socialist India.

Where is the money to come from? In terms of cash, the reconstruction advocated in this chapter may easily cost ten times the present expenditure on education. But a little deeper thinking will show that the cost of education is a mere redistribution of work. The surplus labour in India is so great that a diversion of the labours of a few lakhs of the population for education will not affect the labour supply to other fields, and therefore, the real cost will be little. In the last analysis, it will only amount to the handing back part of their income to the intelligentsia for services.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HEALTH AND MEDICAL RELIEF.

The organisation of the health of the nation is obviously even more important than the spread of education. But it is a more difficult and slower work. It does not consist of mere organisation of health and medical services. An adequate discussion of this problem involves the consideration of the birth and death rates, nutrition, housing, water-supply, drainage and above all the traditional and superstitious practices of the people. They will just be touched in this chapter.

Annually, there are about a crore of live births besides about 2 lakhs of still births. Of this crore of children born alive, about 16 lakhs die before they are one year old and another 11 lakhs before they are five years old. Including these, there are annually nearly 64 lakhs deaths leaving an increase of population of 36 lakhs or 1 per cent per annum. So long as life is produced and destroyed in this abundance, the vital energies of the Indian people cannot be successfully diverted to the task of making life fuller and richer. It is also true to say that unless life is made fuller and richer, neither the birth rate nor the death rate can be materially altered. This vicious circle has to be pierced at both ends. It has been

observed that increase in education and material prosperity results in slowing down of the birth rate. A more determined attack on child marriage and the raising of the minimum age of the marriage to 18 for girls and 21 for boys will also reduce the birth rate. The question of artificial birth control is a difficult and delicate one. Scientific medical opinion has not been able to ascertain yet its long term effects. Some European nations are seriously alarmed at their declining birth-rates and are frantically trying to avert what some of them fear to be national suicide. But a moderate use of it in India for spacing of births and prevention of excessive maternity seems to be justified. It is obvious that till the masses are far better educated, it cannot become a factor affecting the population question. There will be plenty of time for Socialist India to consider the question scientifically.

The question of death rate depends partly on the birth rate and partly on nutrition sanitation and medical relief. The following figures indicating the causes of mortality in India have been taken from the Annual Report of the Public Health Commissioner of India for 1936. Of the 64 lakhs who died in that year, cholera claimed 16 lakhs of victims, small-pox 1.05 lakhs, dysentery and diarrhoea 2.82 lakhs, respiratory diseases 4.93 lakhs, fevers 36 lakhs and the rest were due to miscellaneous causes. There is no doubt that a considerable portion of this mortality is preventable.



The problems of nutrition, housing, water-supply, and drainage are intimately connected with economic planning and this has been dealt with in earlier chapters. It is enough to say that very few towns have proper drainage schemes. Only four towns in the province of Madras have such schemes in operation and the position is not different in other provinces. As to protected water supply, out of 78 towns with a population of over 50,000 only 61 had such supply in 1936, out of 86 towns with a population between 30,000 and 50,000 only 46 had it, and out of 1,134 smaller towns only 143 could boast of clean drinking water. There is no need to speak of the villages. They know little of sanitation and drink any water they get.

Medical relief is perhaps better organised in India than health or sanitation. Still, even here only the fringes of the vast rural areas have been touched. As against 2,112 urban hospitals and dispensaries, there were only 2,112 in rural areas. As the urban institutions serve also the surrounding rural areas, these numbers do not indicate the relative proportion of the populations provided with medical facilities, but it is obvious that an enormous number of villages have to be content with the rough and ready treatment of the local *vaid*s and physicians. It is estimated that there are from 35,000 to 40,000 qualified doctors in India or one doctor for 10,000 of the population. At least ten times the

number will be required if there is to be adequate provision for medical relief in this country. The question of extending facilities for medical education and the final solution of the controversy between the rival claims of so called indigenous systems of medicine are matters of vital importance.

The controversies about rival systems of medicine are largely futile and meaningless. The medicines of the indigenous physicians can be put to the objective test and their utility scientifically tested. There can be no two systems so far as the basic knowledge of the human body is concerned nor two sets of symptoms for any disease. Hence Medicine, in so far as it is a science based on actual observation and experiment, has to be an indivisible whole. The real basis of complaint against the allopathic doctors is that they do not bring an open mind towards the actual effects of the old methods of treatment and that there are no proper facilities to conduct research regarding their efficacy, with a view to their incorporation in modern medicine. These defects have to be remedied but to have two or more systems of medical education or multiple types of doctors, no two of which understand the language of the other, will result in waste and confusion.

There is another idea going round the country that only one quality of doctor should be produced in our medical institutions. In Madras, for instance,

the L.M.P. course has been abolished and medical standards unified. This is no doubt a desirable reform but the supply of the requisite number of doctors is no less necessary. In capitalist India the existing poor supply has already reached the saturation point. But socialist reconstruction will require a number of the order of ten times the present supply, and, in the earlier stages at least, the medical course may have to be shortened and the students recruited at an earlier age.

The mental and psychological change of attitude of the people towards health and cleanliness is as important as the building up of external facilities. Hindu tradition, for instance, has prescribed a high code for cleanliness of the body and the kitchen and the living portions of the dwelling-house. But it is hopelessly defective regarding the disposal of excreta and communal cleanliness. Houses and villages have no provision for sanitary conveniences and in many parts dirty clothes are put on after bathing. Poverty has much to do with this state of affairs but the creation of a new tradition is equally important.

The eradication of beliefs in spirits, mantras and charms is another essential part in a campaign for health and hygiene. So long as these superstitions exist in relation to cholera, small-pox, plague and other epidemics their control and eradication will be an uphill task. An intensive and nationwide

campaign against these superstitions will bear great fruit and no time should be lost in inaugurating it

The main items of the socialist programme of health can be briefly outlined. They are the reduction of the birth rate by half and the death rate by a third which will reduce the increase of population from 1 to  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent per annum, the provision of one doctor per village who will also look after the sanitation and vital statistics of the village, the replanning and rebuilding of the villages and towns with adequate facilities for water supply and drainage a new tradition of cleanliness, and a plentiful supply of milk, vegetables and soap.

As in the case of elementary education, it is only through voluntary mass action on the part of the villages themselves that this programme can be successfully carried out. The other agencies can merely stimulate, educate and provide facilities by training the necessary number of doctors midwives and nurses. Competition and friendly rivalry between the villages can do a great deal in this field and every step should be taken to promote such competition. It should be possible to classify the villages and towns every year in various grades according to their endeavours to promote health and hygiene and an unceasing propaganda should be maintained to induce the lazier ones to catch up with the rest. The Provincial Governments may

also offer prizes in the form of works of art or even substantial cash grants to the places which set the pace. The actual work has, however, to be done only by the people themselves. Owing to the lack of popular interest, the masses are not getting the full benefit of the sums which are now spent on public health.

## CHAPTER XVII

### SOCIALISM AND LIBERTY.

When food, health and education have been made secure, adequate, universal and free, the ground is cleared for a real discussion of freedom. So long as any of these is precarious or uncertain, there can be no real liberty of any kind for all. When liberty is praised in capitalist society, it generally means the liberty of propertied persons. Even this is of a very abstract and restricted type. Freedom in modern society is a matter of careful planning and organisation and is not mere abstention from interference. The freedom of thought, organisation and the press can now be enjoyed only by those who have the leisure and the money to organise public meetings, own printing presses and spend substantial sums on travelling and railway and motor fare. Theoretically, even the poor men can do these things through combination but when most of them are ill fed, uneducated and distracted by incessant family worries, they naturally allow the moneyed men to run their organisations, parties and newspapers. In politics, freedom is said to consist of having a vote to be used at intervals for the benefit of the classes who exploit the ordinary voters. In the field of economics, it is reduced to

the farcical right to strike and to starve. Is there any wonder that millions have preferred to throw away this scarecrow of liberty for the spacious promises of adventurers who propose security of food and equal slavery for the rich and poor alike?

It should be possible for socialism to evolve a fuller and more positive conception of liberty for which every one will fight and give his life, if necessary, without any hypnotic propaganda or coercion. If socialism is achieved through peaceful methods, this liberty also would be of the essence of the process. It would be an ample justification to prefer the slower tempo of non violent evolution towards socialism.

The first and most primary liberty is to give the worker a voice in the economic processes which absorb most of his time and energies. The industrial worker should have an effective part in the conduct of the affairs of his factory and the agricultural worker in that of the farm in which he works. There should be a workers' council attached to every factory and agricultural farm which will have the right of advising the management in all matters. Except in the case of co operative undertakings which supply their own capital and bear their own losses, this council cannot have the ultimate voice - but ordinarily, its views will prevail while in matters of difference there would be an appeal to the authority in which the formal ownership of the

factory or farm is vested. The workers' council will be elected by the workers either generally or by groups doing different kinds of work according to the nature of the work.

In the political field, the active participation of the people should be secured by the autonomy of the village panchayats and municipal councils having large resources and functions and by means of referendum on all important issues on which opinion in the central or provincial legislatures is keenly divided. As there would be no propertied interests to mislead or corrupt the electorate, the discussion and decision by the voters themselves of important political and economic issues will be a powerful instrument of adult education.

To secure positive freedom of thought, there should be public meeting places, open and closed, which can be rented to any group on a nominal fee. Similarly, there should be state printing presses which should print any book or pamphlet on the payment of the cost provided they do not infringe any law. When there is any dispute regarding the propriety of any publication, free legal decision by an impartial authority should be available. Co-operative societies for running newspapers and journals and owning printing presses should be encouraged. The only limitations to this freedom should be abstinence from direct or indirect incitement to violence, avoidance of malicious slander, and temperate and decent language.



Religious freedom is a more complicated business. There can be no question that every one should be absolutely free to believe what he likes regarding God, Soul or the life after death. Normal discussion and propagation of these views should not be interfered with. But ownership of property by religious bodies, organised conversion, claim of religion to regulate marriage, inheritance and other matters require careful handling. The right to do propaganda against religion in general or against a particular religion is also not an easy matter to decide. So far as property is concerned, religious bodies could no more be allowed to become rentiers than private individuals. The only landed property which any religious group is entitled to own should be the temples, mosques, churches, prayer halls, libraries, etc., which are necessary for its religious functions. Funding of donations at a State bank without interest should be allowed but the management of such funds should vest in a democratically constituted body of the members of the group concerned. Civil matters like marriage should be regulated by civil law common to all alike though religious ceremonies in addition to conformity with the civil law may be permitted according to custom. While individual conversions should be freely permitted, no active canvassing for conversion or denunciation of other religions to promote it can be allowed.

The problem of social freedom is even more complicated, for, it lies in the region of emotional reactions which cannot be regulated by law or social organisation. Still, the abolition of the fear of poverty and destitution, education and secularisation of the laws of marriage and divorce will bring about a great degree of emancipation from innumerable and unnecessary fetters by which the Indian, be he a Muslim or a Hindu, is bound.

Socialism does not involve absolute equality of income for every one and any such idea is altogether impracticable. Still, gross inequalities have a corroding effect on the mind. The nationalisation of the instruments of production will cut off the main source of economic inequality. The salaries and wages payable in any organised business should be subject to a maximum and a minimum, the former being, say, no more than ten times the latter. There should also be a maximum prescribed for inheritance by any person, the rest being taken over by the State. There would be very few cases for the application of any such law.

The rule of law and the freedom from arrest or punishment except in accordance with due legal processes underlies every other liberty. This again depends upon how the laws are made and how they are enforced. It has already been suggested that even democratic legislatures are not sufficient and that important laws should be submitted to the people

directly through a referendum. This is particularly necessary in the case of laws restricting ordinary civil liberties. In capitalist society justice is so costly that the ordinary man prefers to suffer rather than vindicate his rights through the courts. Unless justice is free and swift, it will continue to be a costly luxury for the favoured few. With private property in land and machinery, many causes of litigation will vanish in socialist society. But the existence of a strong and independent legal profession and an impartial judiciary will be even more necessary than now. The practice now obtaining of payment to lawyers individually by parties will both be impossible and undesirable in a society which consists entirely of workers with strictly limited incomes. The legal profession should be organised as an autonomous public corporation which will pay its members and the fees in any particular case will be paid to the corporation by the factory, farm or other economic unit to which the individual belongs. Where the penalty does not include imprisonment, the association concerned may recover the cost by a small levy on the wages or the salary of the worker. In serious cases, the cost of defence as well as the prosecution will have to be borne by the provincial Government.

It will be seen from the foregoing that the concept of liberty in modern society is not a simple one and the habit of looking upon it as mere

abstention from oppression on the part of the state is due to its being considered to be the privilege of the propertied classes. Real freedom is like the free motion of a motor car. It results from the perfect co-ordination of economics, politics and education. In the last analysis, only the voluntary acceptance of the principles of non-violence and self-restraint on the part of a majority of a community can secure freedom for its members.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### SOCIALISM AND CULTURE.

One of the serious objections generally brought against socialism is that it is materialistic. This is due to two reasons. One is the use of the phrase 'dialectical materialism' to describe the method of historical analysis expounded by Karl Marx. It is true that he tried to show that the mainspring of historical developments is the economic structure of society at a certain time and the technical resources at the disposal of that society. It was not the theory of Karl Marx that other factors like religion, race and culture had not their place but only that they came after the primary purpose of producing and distributing the fundamental necessities of life. It is difficult to see how this obvious truth can be denied. But it has nothing to do with the notion that socialism is materialistic. It is capitalism that has installed Mammon as the highest of all Gods. The main pursuit of man in capitalist society is to become rich and through it to force other men to minister to his needs and vanity.

The second reason why socialism is thought to be materialistic is that socialists are always thinking and speaking of material welfare while capitalist thinkers and speakers prefer to speak about art, literature, philosophy and religion. This is to a certain

extent true. But the cause is quite different. Under capitalism, most of the writers either belong to the leisured classes or are seeking to obtain their goodwill. It would not do to remind these favoured few that literature, art, beauty and comfort are practically non-existent to the vast majority whose sole task in this world is to labour for the benefit of a small class. Only religion has tried to console the poor, but even religion has generally been made the tool of the capitalist to exploit the rest. There is no church, temple or mosque which does not fawn before the rich.

When a man is sick, health is his only preoccupation. When the indispensable material framework of society is rotten, to repair it has to be the main work of every reformer. This is exactly the position of the socialist. It is shameful that in this fertile world, man should ask for food and not have it or that he should seek for work and not find it. It is the indispensable pre-requisite of any decent civilisation that so far as prime necessities of life are concerned, man should be as careless and free as any animal. It is true that in their enthusiasm some socialists like to picture a state of society in which every one will be surrounded by every material luxury. This picture is neither inherent in socialism nor is it even true to its spirit. In any case, Indian socialism can have nothing to do with it. With hardly one acre per head of cultivated land and

with a reserve of less than half an acre per head and a vast population approaching forty crores, simplicity of life is enjoined by objective necessity. It is foolish to imagine a state in which every Indian family will have its motor-car. Socialist India is rather likely to ban all private cars and make public conveyance cheap and comfortable for all. The true objective of socialism is to release man from his bondage to materialism by a scientific pooling and distribution of work and wealth. All except the very young and old and sick will do productive work and none will fear starvation. When this stage is reached, socialist society will abandon the barren path of idle and corrupting material luxury to develop the limitless domains of the intellect and the spirit where all can have as much as they can take.

If the masses of India are freed from their poverty and illiteracy, literature and art will have almost limitless scope for expansion. No single organisational arrangement will suffice to cope with this expansion. The various organs of the socialist state will maintain printing presses which will print not only the books and journals liked by the authorities but every other not proscribed by law on payment of reasonable charges. Co-operative societies of authors and journalists, academics, universities and even individual schools and colleges will be encouraged to publish books and journals. There would be substantial public prizes which

would enable talented authors not supported by any organisation to develop their genius. There should be no surprise if socialist India should require as literary workers, a number, larger than the entire present output of our universities. If the *per capita* expenditure on books and newspapers and magazines is no more than Rs. 2, the industry will involve Rs. 70 crores and if only 30 per cent of this accrues to literary workers, it would suffice to maintain 3 lakhs of workers on an average remuneration of Rs 700 per year.

Perhaps, the greatest service done by religion to humanity is the spread of music. In this country, religion has been propagated mainly through music. This widespread love of music will get enormous stimulus under socialism. In fact, music is the art *par excellence* for this country. Painting, statuary, architecture and other arts will also have their places but they will occupy a subordinate place if only for the reason that they cannot be developed on a scale to reach the masses. But simple music should be an essential part of education and youths of both sexes who have got a taste for it should be carefully selected and trained. Many forms of music, especially group music, have to be developed according to our own genius and there is no doubt that music will play a great part in socialist India.

Comfort and luxury are in a different category from literature, art or science. It is wrong to take



extreme attitudes towards them. But, the question will be simplified for socialists by the test whether the particular comfort or luxury could be provided on a scale sufficient for the entire population. If it cannot, it ought normally to be avoided by all unless special reasons necessitate their production and supply to particular persons. Take, for instance, cosmetics. What a monstrous waste of national effort it will be to encourage a hundred million women in India to make up their faces! Tobacco is on the border line and it may have to be rationed strictly. Fortunately, the question of intoxicating liquor has been decided and complete prohibition has become the accepted policy of this country.

While luxury has to be avoided as far as possible, innocent sports and entertainment have to be consciously fostered. Here also, the objective should be to enable the vast numbers to participate and mass games may have to be invented. From the point of view of pure pleasure, the glorious moonlight nights should be considered as the gift of the gods and the people should be educated to enjoy them fully.

The radio and the cinema are bound to play a large part in the life of the people and their well-ordered development is of the highest importance. It is not likely to be possible to fit every house in the villages with a radio and it is not even desirable

to do so. The village radio should be a source of communal enjoyment and it should be located in a nice park with pretty lawns so that the people could sit in the open in the cool evenings after a hot day and hear the news, songs and stories broadcast by the radio.

The cinema theatres in towns should be owned by the municipalities as they will be a source of increasing revenue. The films should however be made by cooperative societies of artistes or other special corporations in order to encourage originality. The technical training necessary for the business should be given by the universities and the educational authorities should have an organisation in each province to make educational films. The rural areas should have theatres owned by groups of village Panchayats. It is possible to have open air theatres without any entrance fee if the villagers agree to a small entertainment tax and this will be in accordance with our tradition, as in ancient India village theatricals were free and financed by common funds.

Nazi Germany, in spite of its cruelty and brutality in many directions has done a great service by popularising the notion of *strength through joy*. This phrase exactly depicts the vital needs of India. The Indian people have nothing to learn of truth or gentleness from others. They have, however, always lacked strength and the joy of life. To give

them in the simplest and most natural fashion must be a task of special importance for Socialist India. The hill stations and other beautiful places should be handed over to public trusts and the village panchayats and the municipalities should be encouraged to build quarters for their citizens who may be sent in batches for health and pleasure. Cheap travel and scientific arrangements for catering and other comforts will also be a matter for serious consideration in the attempt to enrich the life of the people.

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of labour for agricultural processes. When education is organised and children are withdrawn from agricultural labour, the present unemployed will be able to find work. This will involve, of course, seasonal unemployment for the agriculturists and this is really the essential problem of India so far as unemployment is concerned. Industrialisation on the capitalist model will, in due course, produce the far more difficult problem of total unemployment; but if industrialisation is achieved on a socialist basis it need never arise at all. The location of factories, the regulation of shifts and other labour problems should be settled in a manner which will provide the maximum work to the agriculturist, in poorer areas in their off season.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HELP TO THE OLD AND THE UNFORTUNATE

One of the most sorrowful features of modern India is the ever increasing number of beggars. The census of 1931 gave the figure of 14 lakhs but there is no doubt that this number represents but a fraction of those who are utterly destitute and are dependent on uncertain and indiscriminate public charity. One cannot go to any sacred place in India without being besieged by an endless stream of beggars of all ages and in every condition of anæmia, ill-health, disease and distress. The British Government in India has wisely restrained from attempting to tackle this problem as beyond its capacity. Though there has been much talk among nationalists regarding measures to end this disgraceful state of things, they have never had the chance to come into grips with it, the short period of the Congress regimes being taken up by more pressing problems of the middle and lower middle classes.

Destitution is due to unemployment, old age, or physical incapacity due to sickness, accident or other causes. One of the advantages of an agricultural country is that there need be no total unemployment. In certain seasons there is actual deficiency

of labour for agricultural processes. When education is organised and children are withdrawn from agricultural labour, the present unemployed will be able to find work. This will involve, of course, seasonal unemployment for the agriculturists and this is really the essential problem of India so far as unemployment is concerned. Industrialisation on the capitalist model will, in due course, produce the far more difficult problem of total unemployment; but if industrialisation is achieved on a socialist basis it need never arise at all. The location of factories, the regulation of shifts and other labour problems should be settled in a manner which will provide the maximum work to the agriculturists in poorer areas in their off season.

The right to work and fair wages is fundamental to any civilised society but this right can never be fully realised in practice in a capitalist society. The device of unemployment relief is good for temporary unemployment; but it can never be a satisfactory substitute to useful work for all. In India, it cannot be solved through centralised methods. So far as the vast rural population is concerned, the duty to provide for its unemployed, sick and old persons should devolve on the village Panchayat. It should be obligatory on every Panchayat to set apart a small portion of its income for this purpose. The amount of relief will vary according to the circumstances of each village; but the Provincial Government

should have schemes of public works ready for each area to be taken up during times of famine and flood. *It may be possible for the villages to get some work even from very old people as watchmen, gardeners, etc.*

In urban areas and the power industries, it should be possible to have unemployment and sickness insurance on a scientific basis. The organised industries will certainly provide for old age and sickness, and to some extent for unemployment, but in the case of the last, provincial governments' assistance may be necessary.

In socialist society, the tendency to save will not be so great as under capitalist society. It would, therefore, be desirable to insist on compulsory life insurance for all. The premia will be deducted from the salaries and wages and will form the fund out of which pensions are paid to old people and orphans. In the earlier stages this fund will be available as capital for industrialisation. Assuming that only one member in each family is insured for Rs. 100, the annual premium at the rate of Rs. 4 per policy will amount to the handsome total of 28 crores of rupees. There should be option to insure for larger amounts subject to a maximum for each family of two or three thousand rupees. Each village and town will insure its members but it will reinsure itself with the Provincial Government who will have a separate Insurance Board to deal with



the matter. The policy amounts should be distributed to the holders or their families as monthly pensions or in lump according to the circumstances of each case.

In spite of all these methods, special asylums and orphanages will be necessary. Even now there are many of them but they are located in a haphazard manner and they are too few to meet the needs of the country. While they should be managed on a provincial basis, a small contribution may be levied from the town or village from which the sick, deficient or disabled comes. The bringing home to every unit of the population the sense of responsibility for its unfortunates is essential for active co-operation in preventing the spread of infectious diseases and in taking common measures of health and hygiene.

With our immense population, there need be no hesitation in sterilising all those who are likely to transmit disease or other serious mental and physical incapacity. In recent years, some steps have been taken to segregate lepers and prevent their infection, but in such work thoroughness is of paramount importance as catching hold of stray lepers will not diminish the danger to society. Nothing short of complete and compulsory medical inspection of the entire population and the segregation of persons suffering from leprosy and venereal diseases will give a fair start to the next generation.

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If there is a doctor for every village or even a group of three or four villages, this is not so difficult as it may appear at first sight. The real trouble will be in the deep family affections and the habit of the people to put up with such diseases. A preliminary campaign to educate the people of the suicidal nature of this toleration towards infectious and inheritable diseases will be necessary.

Religious mendicancy is such an established institution that it would require careful tackling. But house to house begging should be strictly prohibited and it should be the duty of religious and charitable organisations to look after those who have taken vows of poverty.

A deep feeling of the sanctity of human life is at the basis of social life and the feeling against suicide and its legal prohibition are normally just. But this feeling should not be reduced to an absurdity by trying to keep alive those who suffer from ineradicable and intense pain and whose death will be a mercy to themselves and to others. In cases there should be some procedure by which persons concerned and his relations are entitled put an end to useless suffering.

**PART 5**  
**THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM**  
**CHAPTER XX**

**SWARAJ AND SOCIALISM**

In the foregoing chapters, an attempt has been made to indicate a programme of socialist reconstruction on the assumption that such reconstruction can be made peacefully and without a proletarian revolution. It is not claimed that the picture is complete or that it cannot be varied. It is largely suggestive and illustrative but it can be asserted with some degree of certainty that if at all India is to establish socialism non-violently, she will have to go about it along the lines indicated. In this and succeeding chapters, the far more difficult question of political strategy will be dealt with. It is tempting to avoid this controversial section but this book is not intended to be a mere utopia and it is essential to point out how the ideas contained in it can be materialised under the objective conditions obtaining at present. The first and foremost question is the relation of the national dream of Swaraj to Socialism.

It is a half-truth to say that all talk of socialism should wait till the advent of Swaraj. A great battle has been fought in the Indian National Congress over the word Swaraj. Gandhiji has always contended that it is useless to attempt to

define it as the term should be allowed to represent the ideal of the country at all times and its meaning should be allowed to expand with the expansion of the ideal. This notion was too subtle for the generality of Congressmen and it has now been defined to mean political independence. The latter expression is precise only in its negative significance, *viz.*, freedom from the control of Britain or any other external power. In reality, even theoretical constitutional independence may co-exist with more or less dependence on foreign powers for military and economic purposes. It may be assumed for the present purposes that India is independent, when, by the sole will of her people her constitution can be changed and when its defence and finances are entirely under the control of popularly elected ministers.

Unpalatable as it may seem, it has to be admitted that so long as *India has no other method than non-violence*, even this independence will have to be realised through a period of time and probably by a few stages. The form may differ. It may be that Britain pretends to confer Dominion Status at once but retains control over various matters by specific agreements which can be ended by a given procedure after stated periods. Or, it may prefer to go on yielding ungraciously point by point. In any case, political independence has to be a matter of evolution over some period. No one will suggest that all economic and social reform should stand still during this

period It is only demanded that the Indian National Congress which is fighting the battle of Independence should not be forced now to commit itself to any particular system of social reconstruction This is a fallacious view of things Things that are done in the social and economic fields may be in the line of socialist reconstruction, or, as may be, against such line For instance, alienation of public land to private individuals will make socialist reconstruction more difficult and socialists cannot afford to look on thinking that they should do nothing till Independence is achieved

It has been evident for some time past that the negative definition of Swaraj has ceased to inspire people. The brief experiment of Congress Ministries has intensified this feeling both by what they did and by what they did not. Their attempts to relieve the lot of the masses through Prohibition and agrarian legislation have induced the hope that even partial Swaraj can do immense good But all these reforms have been lacking in vision and coherence. The Karachi programme is a mere string of tit-bits which cannot be pieced together to form a coherent programme of economic emancipation A fuller conception and a more thorough-going exposition of national aims are required. The decision whether India has to progress on the capitalist or the socialist road cannot be postponed any further It should be defined before any further attempts at Congress rule are made

It has been suggested in the earlier chapters of this volume that provided the method of non-violence is accepted and the notion of sudden confiscation given up, the Indian intelligentsia will become enthusiastic supporters of socialism. The struggle for Swaraj will gain tremendous new impetus if the positive goal of the struggle is also clearly defined. It will then become political emancipation from external rule and economic and social emancipation from reactionary vested interests.

There are two possible solutions of the present political deadlock. There may be a settlement between the Congress and the British Government giving the former a better position for further advance and the latter some more breathing time for readjusting her imperialist notions and economic organisation. In the alternative, the British Government will try to carry on with the assistance of the reactionaries, as during the dyarchical regime, with alternate doses of repression and negotiation. Socialist strategy will be different in each case.

If there is a patch-up as a result of which a new constitution is formed by agreement, there will be no more justification for the present conglomerate Indian National Congress and it will be in the interests of democratic evolution, that it should split itself into its three components, capitalist liberals, socialist, and satyagrahis devoted to the revival of ancient handicrafts. Each of these groups should



non-violent Satyagraha and agitation were the only methods available against the British Government, they should have left this part of the business to Gandhi and his disciples who are past masters in this field. Their endless talk of Imperialism and revolution has not added the least bit to national strength. If they had confined themselves to the elaboration of socialist ideas and their application to the problems of India, they would have become an irresistible body both within and without the Congress. Their failure to play a significant role was particularly manifest during the regime of the Congress ministries. Instead of trying to drive these ministries along the socialist policies included in the Karachi Programme, they turned into sterile critics protesting about Civil Liberties and reformism. This leads to their second mistake. They have not yet made up their minds as to the manner of Socialist evolution in India. Most of the spokesmen of the Congress Socialist Party have denounced the idea of reformism and evolution and extolled the notion of revolution. Nothing short of the Russian model will satisfy them. Still they seem to imagine that this model can be followed in the absence of a similar revolution. It is no wonder the Congress Socialist Party has neither the logic of the Communist nor the humility of the Gandhians. It is difficult to see any future for the party unless it frankly accepts the limitations of the non-violent method or amalgamates itself with the Communist Party.

A static conception of Swaraj or Socialism, which will start its career on a glorious day after a victorious revolution which has reduced the enemies of either to dust, is wholly incompatible with any non-violent method, which depends a great deal on rational persuasion of the opposing interests. They should be thought of rather as directions of travel for an awakened India. The goals has to be kept in mind constantly but no progress, however small, may be despised.

## CHAPTER XXI

### MASS PROPAGANDA AND MASS ACTION

So long as Socialists do not seize political power as an organised body under a Constitution which permits them to put their programme into practice through the legislative and executive machinery of the State, they have to concentrate on mass propaganda and mass action to prepare the ground for their advent to power. Skilful use of both will hasten that day and will enable them to act quickly and energetically after coming into power.

Much propaganda for socialism has been carried on during recent years. They have been generally confined to the general principles of socialism with violent denunciations of capitalism, imperialism and fascism. So far as the active workers are concerned, it is essential that they should possess a minimum

province to province and from district to district. Learning to talk about the abolition of zamindaris has no place in ryotwari areas. Pathetic pictures of the landless agricultural labourer are often painted in gatherings of small proprietors whose main difficulties are debt, uncertainty of the monsoon and land revenue. It is amazing how many Congress propagandists go about lecturing without trying to know the actual conditions and problems of their audiences. So long as the main issue is the elimination of foreign political domination, this might not matter. But, socialism cannot be preached in that manner. Socialist propaganda will be effective only to the extent the propagandists can apply the general principles to local conditions.

The education of the propagandist is thus the essential basis of every further advance of socialism among the people. At first sight, it would appear that this should be undertaken by an *All-India* organisation. But the difficulties of such an organisation are very great as is seen in the attempt of the *All-India Congress Socialist Party* in conducting a small weekly. Autonomous associations in each district may be more effective and the members of these associations will try to educate themselves and draw up a memorandum emphasising the special problems of their district and indicating the socialist approach to their solution. These associations will leave immediate political strategy alone and will not take part in the elections to the local bodies and

the legislature. Besides general propaganda, they should initiate local programmes like the municipalisation of hotels, cinema, theatres and seek to play an active part in the co-operative movement. It would be convenient to have every year a provincial conference which will discuss the methods of the various associations and try to evolve programmes for the province. Such programmes should be two-fold. One part should consist of immediate reforms which can be implemented by any government in power which is at all responsive to public pressure, and the other part the plan of socialist reconstruction when a socialist government is installed.

Congress Socialist Party can give up its present role of opposition in the Congress and convert itself into a bureau for the spread of socialist ideas and the evolution of socialist programmes. At present their association with the Communists and the Royists is creating confusion and questions of strategy occupy most of their attention. It is, perhaps, impossible to expect those in charge of that organisation to adopt this course. The initiative should be taken by socialists in each area.

The most formidable obstacle against socialism is, of course, the general poverty of the country and the difficulty of propaganda and organisation without considerable expenditure. If, however, the basic ideas of non-violence and evolution are accepted as the conditions of India's progress towards socialism, a sufficient number of middle class workers, paying their own way and doing work for the cause, can be found. Newspapers are a more difficult proposition. In modern times, even small weeklies cost a great deal. Bulletins and pamphlets have to be the main instruments of printed propaganda. In Tamilnad successful experiments have been made in making cheap literature self-supporting and socialists can profit by them.

It is far easier to organise small socialist libraries in big towns. Generally, the simplest method is to induce one of the sympathisers to have one and place it at the disposal of workers and students.

The function of such libraries should not only be to keep standard books but also the production of new literature with special application to this country and in the local languages

If the unemployed intelligentsia could be drawn into this field it would be a decisive factor. It is not an easy thing to do so. The tradition has been built up that propaganda should be entirely free. If a new tradition can be formed by which each village will pay a small amount to the propagandist as honorarium, it would help in the creation of a new corps of workers who will be investigators and research workers instead of gramophones repeating general platitudes over and over again. The destitute worker is a factor of demoralisation in public life. The habit of turning a blind eye to his needs is a pernicious one. It would damage the cause of socialism, in particular, if its workers have to become abject dependents on rich men for their maintenance.

other workers with some certain means of livelihood. There are many of them who do not need to be employed and have enough property to live a frugal life. In their case opportunity for public life is all that is wanted. This is not so easy as it may appear. Many of them are shy and ignorant of dealing with the public and public workers. They are apt to be cantankerous and to quarrel on minor points. Special efforts have to be taken to provide opportunities for them and to teach them the patience and humility needed for service. Socialism is bound to appeal to their imagination and a systematic attempt to recruit and utilise this class will yield valuable results.

Actual constructive work for the masses gives reality to propaganda but many socialists prefer to exult in mere destructive mental analysis. They criticise khadi and village industries on the one hand and abuse the millowners on the other. They pretend to scoff at the village industries and freely use foreign articles. Some of them even delight in smoking in public and affect a general disregard of social conventions. It is foolish to forget that some degree of puritanism in private life is a sure sign of earnestness and no new movement can gather momentum without it. It is no exaggeration to say that one of the greatest services of Gandhiji is the creation of this spirit and farsighted socialists should seek to strengthen and conserve it. General talk of mass action without intimate



contact with the masses is a source of weakness, not of strength

The method of Satyagraha can and should be used to further the cause of socialism but it cannot be too strongly emphasised that it is no magic. Even in the most favourable circumstances, it has little compelling power and if it is indulged in a reckless and provocative temper, it merely harms the cause. It is a means of quickening rational persuasion and not an alternative to coercive physical force. But used with circumspection, it can enable the agrarian masses to diminish their burdens to an extent which may be sufficient to make the landholders and moneylenders reconcile themselves to the socialist plan of socialising land and credit. It is more difficult to handle in the case of industrial labour though the contrary may appear to be true. The strike is a legitimate weapon but its chances of success are always highly problematical and failure hurts and demoralises the workers a great deal. There is always the temptation to prevent failure by resort to indirect violence.

grievances. A series of such actions may create the intensity of feeling necessary to carry through revolutionary measures in the legislature. Mass propaganda, mass action and state action form one complete series and without either propaganda to begin with or the prospect of state action to end with, non-violent mass action cannot achieve any real economic change.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### IS SOCIALISM INEVITABLE ?

Of all the teachings of Karl Marx, none is perhaps more disputable or has had more effect than the doctrine of the inevitability of socialism. Like the law of Karma in Hinduism, it appears obvious to the believer and absurd to the opponent. Socialism is not merely scientific materialism. It is also a new religion. The rational solution of the economic problems is but a preliminary to a new and higher level of human life in all its aspects. Its aim is to raise the entire humanity to this new level and not merely a few classes. Such a view induces the presumption that socialism is inevitable. Whatever the sceptic might say, the belief that the good must also be true in some way is implicit in human thought and action.

It cannot be denied that the profit motive which is the basis of capitalism is not one of which intelligent men can be proud. It is said in defence that the motive is natural and no device can get rid of it. This is a mere half-truth. Human instincts are various and conflicting. Selfishness, vanity and aggressiveness are to be found side by side with the social instincts of affection and disinterested service. Progress, if it has any meaning at all, consists in

the subordination of the selfish instincts to the generous part of human nature with the aid of thought and social organisation.

Modern science and power machinery have reduced the idea of private property to an absurdity. So long as property was the direct result of individual effort, there was some justification in allowing it to be privately owned. But to hand over the results of steam, petrol and electricity to individuals is not far different from making air and sunlight personal possessions of individuals. Not only this. Modern industry and trade cannot be carried on by individuals and the device of the limited company has all the evils of private property without the immediate responsibilities of its ownership. As a temporary device and as a transition to a more rational system it has played its part but its usefulness is already exhausted. All over the world, the private companies are seeking the protection of the state in an ever-increasing measure and the difficulties of public ownership are appearing to be less than the task of restoring order and fair-play in the field of capitalist anarchy. If the State has to find work for millions of unemployed, maintain the aged, sick and suffering and provide for education and sanitation, is it not obviously unreasonable and foolish to hand over the profitable parts of the social organisation to selfish individuals while taking charge of the unprofitable part?

Thus the central thesis of socialism is not only reasonable but also in the natural line of economic evolution. But to assert that socialism is inevitable, a strong element of faith is needed. The assertion cannot include any prophecy about time and place. All that can be said is that so long as socialism is not achieved, capitalist society will pass from one crisis to another and breed more and more discontent and dissatisfaction. It cannot be said that these evils will bring about socialism by themselves in any country in any given period. It is possible for countries to continue under unsatisfactory political and economic conditions over long stretches of time. There may be sporadic popular outbursts but after each such outburst despair may subside into impotent depression.

Being an effort at rational reconstruction of society, socialism depends entirely on organised political action. The actual type of socialist society achieved will depend to a large extent on the nature of such action. No general formula can indicate the line of such action or its results. They will depend partly on objective conditions and partly on leadership. No country can escape original thinking if it is earnest about establishing a new order suited to her genius, traditions and resources. The Indian socialist movement has not yet passed the stage of expounding general principles and though this may be able to rouse

emotion, the struggle for socialism will become real and effective only to the extent these general principles are applied to Indian conditions and the technique suited to them is consciously adopted

The conclusions of the preceding chapters can be briefly summarised. For India, capitalism offers no opportunities similar to those of Britain or the U S A. A few more industries may be built up and a million or two more workers absorbed in them. But the vast bulk of the Indian people will have to continue in primitive agriculture without the contentment of ancient society and consumed by hatred and envy of the microscopic capitalist classes. Theoretically, the proposal to go back deliberately to rural economy is a better solution than capitalism if these two were the only alternatives before India. But this is neither possible nor desirable. The Indian masses should neither be cut off from modern science and invention nor made its victims. Socialism offers the only way out, not for the luxurious plenty which some dream about, but for simple security of existence and decent cultured life for all. Even under socialism the Indian masses will have to inscribe the slogan of simplicity in their banner. Their heritage of one acre and a half per head makes all visions of extravagant material prosperity foolish and fantastic. In the future as in the past the pleasures of the mind and the spirit would have to compensate our people for

their rather cramped material existence. But actual destitution and devouring care can be abolished, nutritious food, clean houses and simple clothing can be supplied to all and education can make the Indian feel that in his simplicity, his mind and soul have no less and, perhaps more opportunities than in any other country.

Nature and destiny have alike conspired to impose the Gandhian technique as the only means of salvation for India. Violent popular revolts there have been many in the past and there may be some in the future. But only external violence has ever been able to enforce a coercive order over any considerable area of this country. On the other hand many of its social institutions have shown a wonderful stability in spite of the most adverse political and economic vicissitudes. Socialism through non violence may be slower in its evolution but it will become the natural and stable way of life in India much sooner than in most other parts of the world.

The Gandhian technique consists of intense propaganda combined with personal practice of the principles preached and readiness to meet non violent opposition with gentleness and patience and violent opposition with self suffering. The conversion of a sufficiently large number of persons to any particular programme of action on this basis irresistibly prepares the way for formal reconstruction through

legislation and administration. In this country of lakhs of small villages, it is easy to create a feeling of social solidarity in each village leading to the nationalisation of land. All other political and economic structures will be established and controlled by and for these villages. It will be these autonomous village units, and not the industrial proletariat controlled by a strict party organisation, that will wield political power and any attempt to establish any kind of autocracy will meet with instantaneous and effective non-cooperation from every unit.

Electrification and industrialisation there will be and ultimately there would be found ways and means to keep every adult—man and woman—at work, while thankfully receiving every assistance from science and invention. But it will not be speed but universal welfare that will dictate the pace at which medieval India is to be transformed into a fully modernised country. There will be infinite variety and gradation but the direction itself will be fixed.

The main lines in which non-violent socialism can be established in this country have been sketched in the various chapters. It is not claimed that a full and final programme has been outlined or that the suggested methods are anything but tentative. It is earnestly hoped, however, that they may form a new starting point for socialist evolution



in India. To thousands of patriots who are equally convinced of socialism and the impossibility of a proletarian revolution, a new synthesis is required for the co-ordination of theory and practice and this book is meant to be a first attempt at this synthesis. Its purpose will be fulfilled if it provokes Indian leaders and thinkers to bridge the gulf between their thought and action.